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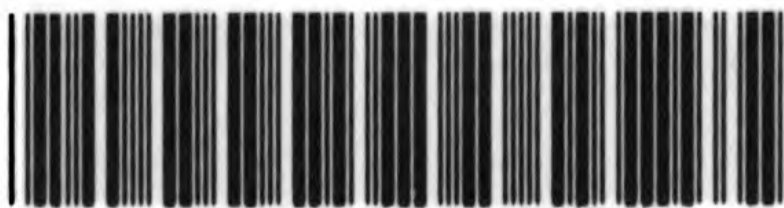
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THE
LIFE, MARTYRDOM, AND LETTERS
OF
Laurence Saunders,
LECTURER IN DIVINITY IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF LICHFIELD.

(BURNT AT COVENTRY, FEB. 8TH, 1555.)

Extracted from Fox's Book of Martyrs

BY
THOMAS HILL, B.D.,
CANON RESIDENTIARY OF THE SAME CATHEDRAL.

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PREFACE

BY THE EDITOR.

THE tercentenary of Queen Elizabeth's Accession having been duly celebrated; it may well be expected, that those who took part in that celebration should evince by some substantial proof their attachment to the principles which her reign was the instrument of establishing in this country. The following reprint is intended by the Editor as an humble thank-offering for the blessings of the Reformation.

LAURENCE SAUNDERS, Lecturer in Divinity in Lichfield Cathedral, was one of that "noble army" who in the preceding reign had "witnessed a good confession." The office to which he was appointed,

and the few writings he has left, are evidences not less of his erudition than of his piety. He acquired at Eton, and at King's College, Cambridge, the learning which he so entirely consecrated to his Divine Master's service.

The citizens of LICHFIELD—a city to which tradition has given a name and arms expressive of the multitude of its early Martyrs,* and to which later history assigns a goodly portion of the faithful witnesses in the reign of Mary—the citizens of LICHFIELD doubtless flocked to their Cathedral, to hear the Word of God, “precious” indeed “in those days,” from the lips of the Lec-

* “Bede calls it LICIDFIELD, which Rouse of Warwick renders ‘a field of carcasses,’ and tells us that many Christians suffered martyrdom there under Dioclesian.—[The story is, that a thousand Christians, who had been instructed by St. Amphibalus, in a place called Christian-field, were martyred, and their bodies left unburied, to be devoured by birds and beasts; from whence the city bears, for their device, an escutcheon of a landscape, with many martyrs in it, in several manners massacred.]”—*Camden's Britannia*, Vol. i. p. 467.

turer in Divinity ; and the Editor humbly trusts that the offering which he now presents to their descendants will be not less acceptable to them than it is appropriate to the office, which, by the favour of his Bishop, he holds in the Cathedral in which Saunders preached.

But, far above all personal and local considerations, the times on which our lot is cast lend their own importance to the history of our Martyrs. This very year, the three-hundredth of our deliverance from Rome, has witnessed an attempt to pollute, with one of her most offensive and dangerous practices, the pure communion of the Church of England. Thanks be to God ! the attempt has been repelled by the indignant voice of the whole country, and recoils with shame on its authors. But it has left an alarming proof of the treachery which instigated it, and which only waits for a more favourable opportunity to further by some fresh effort the designs of the enemy.

“To be forewarned is to be forearmed :” and perhaps nothing is more likely to rouse the vigilance of our unsuspecting countrymen than a voice from the tombs of their martyred forefathers.

The Close, Lichfield,
Nov. 1858.

“WHEN Persecution’s torrent blaze
 Wraps the unshrinking Martyr’s head ;
 When fade all earthly flowers and bays,
 When summer friends are gone and fled,
 Is he alone in that dark hour,
 Who owns the Lord of love and power ?

“Or waves there not around his brow
 A wand no human arm may wield,
 Fraught with a spell no angels know,
 His steps to guide, his soul to shield ?
 Thou, Saviour, art his Charmed Bower,
 His Magic Ring, his Rock, his Tower.”

Christian Year—Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.



THE HISTORY AND MARTYRDOM
OF
LAURENCE SAUNDERS.

AFTER that Queen Mary, by public proclamation in the first year of her reign, had inhibited the sincere preaching of God's holy word, divers godly ministers of the Word, which had the cure and charge of souls committed to them, did, notwithstanding, according to their bounden duty, feed their flock faithfully, not as preachers authorized by public authority (as the godly order of the realm was in the happy days of blessed king Edward), but as the private pastors of particular flocks; among whom Laurence Saunders was one, a man of worshipful parentage. His bringing up was in learning from his youth, in places meet for that purpose, as namely in the school of

Eton; from whence (according to the manner there used) he was chosen to go to the King's College in Cambridge, where he continued scholar of the college three whole years, and there profited in knowledge and learning very much for that time. Shortly after that, he did forsake the University, and went to his parents, upon whose advice he minded to become a merchant, for that his mother, who was a gentlewoman of good estimation, being left a widow, and having a good portion for him among his other brethren, she thought to set him up wealthily; and so he, coming up to London, was bound apprentice with a merchant, named Sir William Chester, who afterward chanced to be Sheriff of London the same year that Saunders was burned at Coventry. Thus, by the mind of his friends, Laurence should needs have been a merchant; but Almighty God, who hath his secret working in all things, saw better for his servant, as it fell out in the end. For although that Saunders was bound by fast indenture to play the merchant, yet the Lord so wrought inwardly in his heart, that he could find no liking in that vocation: so that when his other fellows were busily occupied about that kind of trade, he would secretly withdraw himself into some privy corner, and

there fall into his solitary lamentations ; as one not liking that kind and trade of life.

It happened that his master, being a good man, and hearing his apprentice thus in his secret prayers inwardly to mourn by himself, called him unto him, to know what the cause was, of that his solitariness and lamentation ; who then, perceiving his mind nothing to fancy that kind of life (for so Saunders declared unto him), and perceiving also his whole purpose to be bent to the study of his book, and spiritual contemplation, like a good man directed his letters incontinently unto his friends, and, giving him his indenture, so set him free. And thus Laurence Saunders, being ravished with the love of learning, and especially with the reading of God's word, tarried not long time in the traffic of merchandise, but shortly returned to Cambridge again to his study ; where he began to couple to the knowledge of the Latin, the study of the Greek tongue, wherein he profited in small time very much. Therewith, also, he joined the study of the Hebrew. Then gave he himself wholly to the study of the holy Scripture, to furnish himself to the office of a preacher. In study he was diligent and painful ; in godly life he declared the fruits of a well exercised conscience ; he

prayed often and with great fervour; and in his prayers, as also at other times, he had his part of spiritual exercises, which his hearty sighing to God declared, in which when any special assault did come, by prayer he felt present relief. Then was his company marvellous comfortable; for as his exercises were special teachings, so in the end they proved singular consolations; wherein he became so expert, that within short space he was able to comfort others who were in any affliction, by the consolation wherewith the Lord did comfort him. Thus continued he in the University, till he proceeded Master of Arts, and a long space after.

In the beginning of king Edward's reign, when God's true religion was begun to be restored, after licence obtained, he began to preach; and was so well liked of them which then had authority, that they appointed him to read a divinity lecture in the College at Fotheringay, where, by doctrine and life he edified the godly, drew many ignorant to God's true knowledge, and stopped the mouth of the adversaries. He married about that time, and in the married estate led a life unblamable before all men. The College of Fotheringay being dissolved, he was placed to be Reader in the Minster at Lichfield; where he so behaved himself in

teaching and living, that the very adversaries did give him a full report as well of learning, as of much godliness. After a certain space, he departed from Lichfield to a benefice in Leicestershire, called Church-Langton, whereupon he, keeping residence, taught diligently, and kept a liberal house. From thence he was orderly called to take a benefice in the city of London, named Allhallows in Bread-street. Then minded he to give over his cure in the country: and therefore, after he had taken possession of his benefice in London, he departed from London into the country, clearly to discharge himself thereof. And even at that time began the broil about the claim that queen Mary made to the crown, by reason whereof he could not accomplish his purpose.

In this trouble, and even among the beginners of it (such I mean as were for the queen), he preached at Northampton, nothing meddling with the state, but boldly uttered his conscience against popish doctrine and Antichrist's damnable errors, which were like to spring up again in England, as a just plague for the little love which the English nation did bear to the blessed word of God, which had been so plentifully offered unto them. The queen's men, which were

there and heard him, were highly displeased with him for his sermon, and for it kept him among them as prisoner: but, partly for love of his brethren and friends, who were chief doers for the queen among them, partly because there was no law broken by his preaching, they dismissed him. He, seeing the dreadful days at hand, inflamed with the fire of godly zeal, preached with diligence at both those benefices, as time could serve him: seeing he could resign neither of them now, but into the hand of a Papist.

Thus passed he to and fro preaching, until that proclamation was put forth, of which mention is made in the beginning. At that time he was at his benefice in the country, where he (notwithstanding the proclamation aforesaid) taught diligently God's truth, confirming the people therein, and arming them against false doctrine, until he was not only commanded to cease, but also with force resisted, so that he could not proceed there in preaching. Some of his friends, perceiving such fearful menacing, counselled him to fly out of the realm; which he refused to do. But seeing he was with violence kept from doing good in that place, he returned towards London to visit the flock, of which he had there the charge.

On Saturday, the 14th of October, as he was coming nigh to the city of London, Sir John Mordant, councillor to queen Mary, did overtake him, and asked him, whither he went. "I have," said Saunders, "a cure in London; and now I go to instruct my people according to my duty." "If you will follow my counsel," quoth master Mordant, "let them alone, and come not at them." To this Saunders answered, "How shall I then be discharged before God, if any be sick, and desire consolation? if any want good counsel, and need instruction? or if any should slip into error, and receive false doctrine?" "Did you not," quoth Mordant, "preach such a day (and name the day) in Bread-street, London?" "Yes verily," said Saunders: "that same is my cure." "I heard you preach myself," quoth master Mordant; "and will you preach now there again?" "If it please you," said Saunders, "to-morrow you may hear me again in that same place; where I will confirm, by the authority of God's word, all that I said then, and whatsoever before that time I taught them." "I would counsel you," quoth the other, "not to preach." "If you can and will forbid me by lawful authority, then must I obey," said Saunders. "Nay," quoth he, "I will not forbid

you ; but I do give you counsel." And thus entered they both the city, and departed each from other. Master Mordant, of an uncharitable mind, went to give warning to Bonner Bishop of London, that Saunders would preach in his cure the next day. Saunders resorted to his lodging, with a mind bent to do his duty : where, because he seemed to be somewhat troubled, one who was there about him, asked him how he did. " In very deed," saith he, " I am in prison, till I be in prison : " meaning that there his mind was unquiet until he had preached ; and that he should have quietness of mind, though he were put in prison.

The next day, which was Sunday, in the forenoon he made a sermon in his parish, entreating on that place which Paul writeth to the Corinthians : " I have coupled you to one man, that ye should make yourselves a chaste virgin unto Christ. But I fear lest it come to pass, that as the serpent beguiled Eve, even so your wits should be corrupt from the singleness which ye had towards Christ." He recited a sum of that true christian doctrine, through which they were coupled to Christ, to receive of him free justification through faith in his blood. The papistical doctrine he compared to the serpent's deceiving : and, lest they should be de

ceived by it, he made a comparison between the voice of God, and the voice of the popish serpent; descending to more particular declaration thereof, as it were to let them plainly see the difference that is between the order of the Church service set forth by king Edward in the English tongue, and comparing it with the Popish service then used in the Latin tongue. The first he said was good, because it was according to the word of God, and the order of the primitive church. The other he said was evil, and though in that evil be intermingled some good Latin words; yet was it but as a little honey or milk mingled with a great deal of poison, to make them drink up all. This was the sum of his sermon. In the afternoon he was ready in his church to have given another exhortation to his people. But the Bishop of London interrupted him, by sending an officer for him. This officer charged him, upon the pain of disobedience and contumacy, forthwith to come to the Bishop his master. Thus, as the apostles were brought out of the temple, where they were teaching, unto the rulers of the priests; so was Laurence Saunders brought before this bishop in his palace of London, who had in his company the aforementioned Sir John Mor-dant, and some of his chaplains. The Bishop laid no

more to Laurence Saunders's charge, but treason for breaking the queen's proclamation : heresy and sedition for his sermon.

The treason and sedition his charity was content to let slip, until another time ; but a heretic he would now prove him, and all those, he said, who did teach and believe that the administration of the Sacraments and all orders of the Church are most pure, which do come most nigh to the order of the primitive Church. For the Church was then but in her infancy, and could not abide that perfection which was afterward to be furnished with ceremonies. And for this cause Christ himself, and after him the apostles, did in many things bear with the rudeness of that Church. To this Laurence Saunders answered with the authority of St. Augustine that ceremonies were, even from the beginning, invented and ordained for the rude infancy and weak infirmity of man ; and therefore it was a token of the more perfection of the primitive Church, that it had few ceremonies, and of the rudeness of the Church papistical, because it had so many ceremonies, partly blasphemous, partly unsavoury and unprofitable.

After much talk had concerning this matter, the Bishop willed him to write what he believed of transub-

stantiation. Laurence Saunders did so, saying, "My lord, ye do seek my blood, and ye shall have it. I pray God that ye may be so baptized in it, that ye may thereafter loath blood-sucking, and become a better man." This writing the Bishop kept for his purpose—even to cut the writer's throat; as shall appear hereafter. The Bishop, when he had his will, sent Laurence Saunders to the Lord Chancellor, as Annas sent Christ to Caiaphas: and like favour found Saunders as Christ his master did before him. But the Chancellor being not at home, Saunders was constrained to tarry for him by the space of four hours, in the outer chamber, where he found a chaplain of the Bishop's very merrily disposed, with certain gentlemen playing at the tables, with divers others of the same family or house occupied there in the same exercise.

All this time Saunders stood very modestly and soberly at the screen or cupboard bare-headed, Sir John Mordant, his guide or leader, walking up and down by him; who, as I said before, was then one of the council. At last the Bishop returned from the Court, whom, as soon as he was entered, a great many suiters met and received: so that before he could get out of one house into another, half an hour was passed. At last he came

into the chamber where Saunders was, and went through into another chamber: where, in the mean way, Saunders's leader gave him a writing, containing the cause, or rather the accusation, of the said Saunders; which when he had perused, "Where is the man?" said the Bishop. Then Saunders, being brought forth to the place of examination, first most lowly and meekly kneeled down, and made courtesy before the table where the Bishop did sit; unto whom the Bishop spake on this wise:

"How happeneth it," said he, "that, notwithstanding the queen's proclamation to the contrary, you have enterprised to preach?"

Saunders denied not that he did preach; saying, that forsomuch as he saw the perilous times now at hand, he did but according as he was admonished, and warned by Ezekiel the prophet—exhort his flock and parishioners to persevere and stand steadfastly in the doctrine which they had learned: saying also, that he was moved and pricked forward thereunto by the place of the apostle, wherein he was commanded rather to obey God than man; and moreover, that nothing more moved or stirred him thereunto, than his own conscience.

Now master Saunders, going forwards in his purpose,

said, "We do only profess and teach the sincerity and purity of the word: the which, albeit it be now forbidden us to preach with our mouths, yet notwithstanding, I do not doubt, but that our blood hereafter shall manifest the same." The Bishop, being in this sort prettily nipped and touched, said, "Carry away this frenzy-fool to prison." Unto whom master Saunders answered, that he did give God thanks, which had given him at last a place of rest and quietness, where he might pray for the Bishop's conversion.

Furthermore, he that did lie with him afterwards in prison, in the same bed, reported that he heard him say, that even in the time of his examination he was wonderfully comforted; insomuch as not only in spirit, but also in body, he received a certain taste of that holy communion of saints, whilst a most pleasant refreshing did issue from every part and member of the body unto the seat and place of the heart, and from thence did ebb and flow to and fro unto all the parts again.

This Saunders continued in prison a whole year and three months; in all which space he sent divers letters to divers men: as one to Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer; another to his wife, and also to others; certifying them

both of the public calamity of the time, and also of his private afflictions, and of sundry his conflicts with his adversaries—as, in writing to his friend, he speaketh of Weston conferring with him in prison, whereof ye shall hear anon (by the leave of the Lord), as followeth in the story. In the mean time the Chancellor, after this little talk with master Saunders (as is aforesaid), sent him to the prison of the Marshalsea, &c. For the Caiaphas (Winchester, I mean) did nothing but bait him with some of his currish eloquence; and so committed him to the prison of the Marshalsea, where he was kept prisoner one whole year and a quarter. But of his cause and estate, thou shalt now see what Laurence Saunders himself did write.

A Parcel of a Letter of Laurence Saunders, sent to the Bishop of Winchester, as an Answer to certain things wherewith he had before charged him.

“Touching the cause of my imprisonment, I doubt whether I have broken any law or proclamation. In my doctrine I did not, forasmuch as at that time it was permitted by the proclamation to use, according to our consciences, such service as was then established. My doctrine was then agreeable unto my conscience and the service then used. The act which I did was

such as, being indifferently weighed, sounded to no breaking of the proclamation, or at the least no wilful breaking of it; forasmuch as I caused no bell to be rung, neither occupied I any place in the pulpit, after the order of sermons or lectures. But be it that I did break the proclamation, this long time of continuance in prison may be thought to be more than a sufficient punishment for such a fault.

“Touching the charging of me with my religion, I say with St. Paul: ‘This I confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my forefathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God,’ &c. And herein study I to have always a clear conscience towards God and towards men: so that (God I call to witness) I have a conscience. And this my conscience is not grounded upon vain fantasy, but upon the infallible verity of God’s word, with the witnessing of his chosen church agreeable unto the same.

“It is an easy thing for them which take Christ for their true pastor, and be the very sheep of his pasture, to discern the voice of their true Shepherd, from the voice of wolves, hirelings, and strangers: forasmuch as Christ saith, ‘My sheep hear my voice.’ Yea, and thereby they shall have the gift to know the right voice of the true Shepherd, and so to follow him, and to avoid the contrary, as he also saith: ‘The sheep follow the shepherd, for they know his voice: a stranger

they will not follow, but will fly from him; for they know not the voice of a stranger.' Such inward inspiration doth the Holy Ghost put into the children of God; being indeed taught of God, but otherwise unable to understand the true way of their salvation. And albeit that the wolf (as Christ saith) cometh in sheep's clothing; yet he saith, 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' For there be certain fruits whereby the wolf is bewrayed, notwithstanding that otherwise, in sundry sorts of devout holiness in outward show, he seemeth never so simple a sheep.

"That the Romish religion is ravening and wolfish, it is apparent in three principal points:—

"First, it robbeth God of his due and only honour.

"Secondly, it taketh away the true comfort of conscience, in obscuring, or rather burying, of Christ and his office of salvation.

"Thirdly, it spoileth God of his true worship and service in spirit and truth, appointed in his prescript commandments, and driveth men into that inconvenience, against the which Christ, with the prophet Isaiah, doth speak sharply: 'This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. They worship me in vain, teaching the doctrine and precepts of men.' And in another place: 'Ye cast aside the commandments of God, to maintain your own traditions.'

"Wherefore I,—in conscience weighing the Romish religion, and, by indifferent discussing thereof, finding

the foundation unsteadfast, and the building thereupon but vain : and, on the other side, having my conscience framed after a right and uncorrupt religion, ratified and fully established by the word of God, and the consent of his true church,—I neither may, nor do intend, by God's gracious assistance, to be pulled one jot from the same ; no, though an angel out of heaven should preach another gospel than that which I have received of the Lord.

“ And although that for lack either of such deep knowledge and profound judgment, or of expedite uttering of that I do know and judge, as is required in an excellent clerk, I shall not be able sufficiently to answer, for the convincing of the gainsayer : yet nevertheless this my protestation shall be of me premised ; that, for the respect of the grounds and causes before considered, albeit I cannot ‘ *explicitâ fide,*’ as they call it, conceive all that is to be conceived, neither can discuss all that is to be discussed, nor can effectually express all that can be expressed, in the discourse of the doctrine of this most true religion, whereunto I am professed : yet do I bind myself, as by my humble simplicity, so by my ‘ *fidem implicitam ;*’ that is, by faith in generality (as they call it), to wrap my belief in the credit of the same, that no authority of that Romish religion repugnant thereunto, shall by any means remove me from the same, though it may hap that our adversaries will labour to beguile us with enticing words, and seek to spoil us through philosophy and deceitful vanity, after

the traditions of men, and after the ordinances of the world, and not after Christ," &c.

And thus much of master Saunders's letter, so much as remained thereof. The residue, because it was rent away, I could not adjoin thereunto. Notwithstanding by this already expressed, it is sufficient to understand, how good was the cause and state of this blessed child of God, being prisoner for Christ's cause. For the defence whereof he wholly bestowed and resigned himself, in such sort, as he forbade his wife to sue for his delivery; and, when others of his friends had by suit almost obtained it, he discouraged them, so that they did not follow their suit, as by his letter following may appear.

A Letter of Master Saunders, to his Wife.

"Grace, mercy, and peace in Christ our Lord.— Entirely beloved wife, even as unto mine own soul and body, so do I daily in my hearty prayer wish unto you; for I do daily, twice at the least, in this sort remember you. And I do not doubt, dear wife, but that both I and you, as we be written in the book of life, so we shall together enjoy the same everlastingly, through the grace and mercy of God our dear Father, in his Son our Christ. And for this present life, let us wholly ap-

point ourselves to the will of our good God, to glorify him either by life or by death; and even that same merciful Lord make us worthy to honour him either way as pleaseth him! Amen.

“I am merry, I thank my God and my Christ, in whom and through whom I shall, I know, be able to fight a good fight, and finish a good course, and then receive the crown which is laid up in store for me, and all the true soldiers of Christ. Wherefore, wife, let us, in the name of our God, fight lustily to overcome the flesh, the devil, and the world. What our harness and weapons be in this kind of fight, look in Ephesians vi.; and pray, pray, pray. I would that you make no suit for me in any wise. Thank you know whom, for her most sweet and comfortable putting me in remembrance of my journey whither I am passing. God send us all good speed, and a joyful meeting. I have too few such friends to further me in that journey, which is indeed the greatest friendship. The blessing of God be with you all, Amen.—A prisoner in the Lord,

“LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

This his constancy is sufficiently commended and declared by his valiant buckling with two mighty enemies, Antichrist and Death. To neither of these did he give place: but, by suffering their malice, got the victory over them both. One of the conflicts which he had with Antichrist and his members, I have gathered out

of a letter of his own handwriting. It was with Dr. Weston, a man, whom though I should praise, yet would all good and godly men worthily dispraise. Of this the said Laurence Saunders thus writeth in a letter which he sent to one of his friends, who wrote to him to know what Dr. Weston did at the Marshalsea: whereunto he thus answereth.

Part of a Letter from Master Saunders to a Friend.

“Master Weston came to confer with master Grimold. What he hath concluded with him I know not: I wish it may be to God’s glory, Amen, Amen. Master Weston of his gentleness visited me, and offered me friendship in his worldly wily sort, etc. I had not so much good manners, as to take it at his hand; for I said, that I was well enough, and ready cheerfully to abide the extremity, to keep thereby a good conscience. ‘Ye be asleep in sin,’ said he. ‘I would awake,’ quoth I, ‘and do not forget “Vigilate et orate,” i. e. “Watch and pray.”’ ‘What church was there, thirty years past?’ ‘What church was there,’ quoth I, ‘in Elias’s time?’ ‘Joan of Kent,’ said he, ‘was of your church.’ ‘No,’ quoth I; ‘we did not condemn her as a heretic.’

“‘Who was of your church,’ said he, ‘thirty years past?’ ‘Such,’ quoth I, ‘as the Romish Antichrist, and his rabble, have reputed and condemned as heretics.’

‘Wickliff,’ said he, ‘Thorpe, Oldcastle,’ etc. ‘Yea,’ quoth I, ‘with many more, as stories do tell.’

“ ‘The Bishop of Rome hath,’ said he, ‘long time played a part in your railing sermons: but, now, be ye sure, he must play another manner of part.’ ‘The more pity,’ quoth I, ‘and yet some comfort it is to see how that the best learned, wisest, and holiest of you all, have heretofore had him to play a part likewise in your sermons and writings; though now, to please the world, you do turn with the weathercock.’ ‘Did you ever,’ said he, ‘hear me preach against the Bishop of Rome?’ ‘No,’ quoth I, ‘for I never heard you preach. But I trow you have been no wiser than others,’ etc.,—with more about the sacrament. Pray, pray. God keep your family, and bless it.”

What a blessed taste this good man had of God’s holy Spirit, by divers and sundry his letters may right well appear to him that is disposed to peruse the same whereof certain we have here thought good, the Lord willing, to express; first beginning with that which he wrote out of the Marshalsea to Drs. Cranmer, Ridley and Latimer, the very prophet of England, then being prisoners for the like cause of Christ in Oxford.

To the Archbishop Cranmer, Bishop Ridley, and Master Latimer, being imprisoned in Oxford.

“ In my most humble wise I salute you, most reveren

fathers in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Immortal thanks and everlasting praises be given unto that our Father of mercies, ‘which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of saints in light; which hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his beloved Son; by whom we have redemption through his blood,’ etc. O most happy estate! that, in an unspeakable wise, our life is hid with Christ in God: but whensoever Christ, which is our life, shall show himself, then shall we also appear with him in glory. In the mean season, as our sight is but in a glass, even in a dark speaking, so we walk in faith, not after outward appearance: the which faith, although, for want of outward appearance, reason reputeth but as vain, yet the chosen of God do know the effect thereof to bring a more substantial state and lively fruition of very felicity and perfect blessedness than reason can reach, or senses receive. By this faith we have in our possession all good things, yea even them ‘which the eye hath not seen, and the ear hath not heard, neither hath entered the heart of man,’ etc. Then if hereby we do enjoy all good things, it followeth that we must needs possess, have, and enjoy you, most reverend fathers, who be no small part of our joy, and good things given us of God.

“We, heretofore, have had the fruition of you by bodily presence to our inexplicable benefit; praised be that our most gracious God there-for! And now in spirit we have the experience of unspeakable comfort by your reverend fatherhoods; for that in this so glo-

rious sort ye become a town set upon a hill, a candle upon a candlestick, a spectacle unto the world, both to the angels and unto men. So that, as we to our great comfort do feel, you also may assuredly say, with St. Paul, that the things which happen unto us, do chance unto the great furtherance of the gospel: so that our bonds in Christ are manifest, not only throughout all the judgment-hall, but in all whole Europe; insomuch that many of the brethren in the Lord, being encouraged through our bonds, dare more boldly speak the word without fear. And herein as you have with St. Paul greatly to rejoice, so we rejoice with you, and we do indeed, with you, give thanks for this excellent worthy favour of our God towards you, that Christ is thus magnified in you; yea, and hereafter shall be magnified in your bodies, whether it be through life or death: of which thing truly we are assured in our prayers for you, and ministering of the Spirit. And although, for your own parts, Christ is unto you in life and death advantage, and that your desire is (and indeed it were better for you) to be loosed and to be with Christ, yet, for the church of Christ, were it much more necessary, that ye should abide in the flesh. Yea, that merciful God, even for his Christ's sake, grant that ye may abide and continue for the furtherance of the church, and rejoicing of faith, that the rejoicing thereof may be the more abundant, through Christ, by your restoring! Amen, Amen.

“But if it seem better otherwise, unto the Divine

Wisdom, that by speedy death he hath appointed you to glorify him, the Lord's will be done. Yea, even as we do rejoyce both on your behalfts, and also on our own, that God is magnified by life, and should be more abundantly glad for the continuance thereof; so we shall no less rejoyce to have the same wrought by death. We shall give thanks for this honour given unto you, rejoycing that ye are accounted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and that 'it is given to you of God, not only that ye should believe in him, but also that ye should suffer for his sake.' And herein we shall have to rejoyce in the behalf of the church of Christ, whose faith may be the faster fixed upon God's verity, being confirmed with three such worthy witnesses. O thanks be to God for this his unspeakable gift!

"And now, most reverend fathers, that you may understand the truth of us and our estate, how we stand in the Lord, I do assure your reverences, partly by that I perceive by such of our brethren as be here in bonds with me, partly by that I hear of them which be in other places, and partly by that inward experience, which I, most unworthily, have of God's good comfort (more abundance whereof I know there is in others), you may be assured, I say, by God's grace, that you shall not be frustrate of your hope of our constant continuance in the cheerful confession of God's everlasting verity. For even as we have received the word of truth, even the gospel of our salvation, wherein we, believing, are sealed with the holy Spirit of promise,

which is the earnest of our inheritance, (the which Spirit certifieth our spirit, that we are the children of God, and therefore God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba,' 'Father,') so, after such portion as God measureth unto us, we, with the whole church of Christ, and with you reverend fathers, receiving the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written; 'I believed, and therefore I have spoken;' we also believe, and therefore speak. For the which we, in this dangerous bondage and other afflictions, having even such a fight as we have seen in you, and have heard of you, are in no wise afraid of our adversaries.

"And forasmuch as we have such an office, even as God hath had mercy on us, we go not out of kind, but even with you, after our little power, we labour to maintain the faith of the gospel, knowing most certainly, that though 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of this power might be God's, and not ours;' yet shall we not be dashed in pieces, for the Lord will put his hand under us. When 'we are troubled on every side, yet are we not without shift:' when 'we are in poverty, we are not utterly without something:' when 'we suffer persecution, we are not forsaken therein:' when 'we are cast down, yet we shall not perish:' but to communicate with our sweet Saviour Christ in bearing the cross, it is appointed unto us, that even with him also we shall be glorified: For it is a true saying, 'If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we be patient, we shall also

reign with him : if we deny him, he shall also deny us.' Wherefore we be of good cheer, 'always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might appear also in our body. For we know, that he which raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also by the means of Jesus, and shall join us to himself together with you. Wherefore we are not wearied ; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our tribulation, which is momentary and light, prepareth an exceeding and eternal weight of glory unto us, while we look not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen, are temporal ; but the things which are not seen, are eternal.

" We testify unto you, reverend fathers, that we draw these matters with joy out of the wells of the Saviour. And I trust we shall continually, with you, bless the Lord, and give thanks unto the Lord out of the wells of Israel. We trust to be merry together at that great supper of the Lamb, whose spouse we are by faith, and there to sing that song of everlasting Hallelujah, Amen. Yea, come Lord Jesus ! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen."

Another letter written to his wife, wherein is to be seen how this worthy warrior prepared himself, even as it were against himself, to the appointed fight, and to keep his standing in Christ's camp.

A Letter of Laurence Saunders to his Wife.

“ Grace and comfort in Christ Jesus, our only comfort in all extreme assaults. Amen.

“ Fain would this flesh make strange of that which the spirit doth embrace. O Lord! how loth is this loitering sluggard to pass forth in God’s path! It phantasieth forsooth much fear of fray-bugs: and were it not for the force of faith which pulleth it forward by the rein of God’s most sweet promise, and of hope which pricketh on behind, great adventure there were of fainting by the way. But blessed, and everlastingly blessed, be that heavenly Father of ours, who, in his Christ, our sufficient Saviour, hath vouchsafed so to shine in our hearts, that he giveth us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ: and having this treasure in our earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be God’s and not ours, ‘ we are (according to his good will) troubled on every side, yet are we not without shift; we are in poverty, but yet not without that is sufficient; we suffer persecution, but are not forsaken therein; we are cast down, nevertheless we perish not; we bear in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might also appear in our body.’ Wherefore, by the grace of our Christ, we shall not be wearied, neither be dismayed by this our probation through the fire of affliction, as though some strange thing had happened unto us: but by his power we shall rejoice, inasmuch

as we are partakers of Christ's passion, that when he doth appear, we may be merry and glad, knowing that 'our tribulation, which is momentary and light, prepareth an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory unto us, while we look not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen.' 'They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.' 'For he that goeth on his way weeping, and scattering his good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his whole sheaves with him.' 'Then, then, shall the Lord wipe away all tears from our eyes. Then, then, shall be brought to pass that saying which is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory? Yea, thanks be to God, which hath given us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.'

"In the mean season it remaineth for us to follow St. Peter's bidding: 'Let them,' saith he, 'that are troubled according to the will of God, commit their souls to him with well doing, as a faithful Creator and Maker.' He is our Maker; we are his handiwork and creatures, whom now, when he hath made, he doth not leave and forsake, as the shipwright doth the ship; leaving it at all adventures to be tossed in the tempest: but he comforteth us his creatures. And in him we live, move, and have our being. Yea, not only that, but now that he hath in his dear Christ repaired us, being before utterly decayed, and redeemed us, purging us unto himself as a peculiar people by the blood of his Son, he hath put on a most tender goodwill and fatherly

affection towards us, never to forget us: unto whom by such promises he hath plighted such faith, that though it were possible that the mother could forget her infant, and not be tender-hearted to the child of her womb, yet may not it be, that his faithful believers should be forgotten of him. He biddeth us to cast our care on him, and saith, that assuredly he careth for us. And what though for a season he does suffer us to be turmoiled in the troublous tempests of temptation, and seemeth, as in much anger, to have given us over and forgotten us? Let not us, for all that, leave off to put our trust in him; but let us with godly Job conclude in ourselves and say, 'Even though he kill me, yet will I put my trust in him.' Let us, with the blessed Abraham, in hope, even contrary to hope, by belief lean unto that our loving Lord, who, though for our probation he suffereth us to be afflicted, yet 'will he not be always chiding, neither keepeth he his anger for ever; for he knoweth whereof we be made; he remembereth that we are but dust.' Wherefore, look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth: so great is his mercy towards them which fear him. Look how wide the east is from the west: so far hath he set our sins from us. Yea, like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto them that fear him.' Oh! what great cause of rejoicing have we in our most gracious God. We cannot but burst forth in the praising of such a bountiful benefactor, and say with the same Psalmist, 'Praise the Lord, O my soul!

and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits.'

"Dear wife, riches I have none to leave behind me, wherewith to endow you after the worldly manner: but that treasure of tasting how sweet Christ is unto hungry consciences (whereof, I thank my Christ, I do feel part, and would feel more), *that* I bequeath unto you, and to the rest of my beloved in Christ, to retain the same in sense of heart always. Pray, pray. I am merry, and I trust I shall be merry, maugre the teeth of all the devils in hell. I utterly refuse myself, and resign myself unto my Christ, in whom I know I shall be strong, as he seeth needful. Pray, pray, pray!

"LAURENCE SAUNDERS."

He wrote many other letters, full of godly instruction and consolation, which cannot all in such large sort be added, as I have done these; therefore thou shalt now, good reader, be content with some such short things as are gathered out of his writings. Being in prison he was, to his fellow-prisoners, a profitable prisoner, to whom, as he faithfully disposed the bread of life, so left he record thereof in this English metre following.

*Laurence Saunders to his Fellow-Prisoners in the
Prison of the Marshalsea.*

"The grace of God declared is, in Christ, his Son most dear,
And teacheth us, in holiness, to live in his true fear;

Whoso then, in that heavenly birth, a child is rightly born,
His Father's will he followeth, and thereunto is sworn.

“Children, of love, their father's will do lovingly embrace;
Servants, of fear, their master's will to do, do somewhat pass:
To children and to servants both, the rod doth oftentimes reach;
The children and the servants both, the rod doth penance teach.

“All ye, therefore, which in this place in strait bondage now be,
Be servants unto righteousness, from sin be loose and free:
Be mindful of all duty, due unto the Lord above,
Be thankful for his benefits, the pledges of his love.
Consider with yourselves, I say, to sanctify the Lord,
In every place, and that alway, by thought, deed, and by word,
“LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

Of the Communion of Saints, the true taste whereof
he learned and felt even in prison, thus he wrote in a
letter which he sent to a gentlewoman:

*A Letter of Laurence Saunders on the
Communion of Saints.*

“Herein [speaking of such friendship as she shewed
unto him] do I take occasion of much rejoicing in our
gracious God and heavenly Father; who, as he hath in
his unmeasurable mercies by faith handfasted us his
chosen children unto his dear Son our Christ, as the
spiritual espouse of such an heavenly husband, so he
linketh us by love one to another; being by that bond
compact together, with such charitable readiness to do
good one to another, that, first, to the glory of God and
his Christ; then, to our own joying in the testimony of
a good conscience; last of all, to the stopping of the

mouths and confounding of our adversaries, we bear that badge, as the right espouse of Christ, which he himself noteth in this saying, 'Herein shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.' Then, further, by this bond of mutual love is set forth the fatherly providence of God towards us his children ; that, though it be he that careth for us, in whom we live, move, and be, who feedeth all flesh with bodily sustenance, yet hath he appointed us, in these present necessities, to stand in his stead one unto another ; wherein is not only set forth our dignity, but also that unspeakable accord and unity among us, the many members in this mystical body. And though that, either for lack of ability, or else for distance of place, power, and opportunity of present helping one another by bodily presence do fail, yet wonderful is the working of God's children through the Spirit of prayer, as whereby they fetch all heavenly influence from Christ their celestial head, by his Spirit to be measured severally as may serve to the maintenance of the whole body. Thus doth our faithful prayer one for another, scatter God's bountiful blessings, both ghostly and bodily, when ordinary ability lacketh, and the arm cannot reach such God's riches," etc.

In another Letter thus he writeth of true Taste of God's Love by Faith ; with the Fruits thereof.

"The love of our most gracious God and heavenly Father, bestowed upon us in the merits of his Christ

our Saviour, who may by conceit of mind comprehend? passing indeed all understanding! Much less can the same by any means be expressly uttered. And, as such heavenly blessings which by faith we fetch from above, be inexplicable, so hard it is to utter (when the faithful are set on fire by love) their readiness to reach forth by charity, to scatter and give, as by faith they have received. But, alas, 'we carry this treasure in earthly vessels.' Many times faith is feeble, and love loseth her fervour: pray we, therefore, 'Lord, increase our faith,' and love forthwith will be on fire. And immortal thanks be given unto our God, who, in our Christ, hath bestowed upon us the first fruits of his Spirit, which crieth in our hearts, 'Abba,' 'Father.' And, as St. Paul saith, 'Seeing we have the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed and therefore have I spoken, we also believe and therefore we speak:' yea, God knoweth, this Spirit putteth us in mind to speak, but in attempting thereof we are driven to say with Moses, 'O Lord! I am slow-mouthed;' and with Jeremiah, 'O Lord! I cannot speak,' etc."

In this letter he doth, with most tender affection, commend his wife and child to the christian care of that same his dear friend to whom he did write; which doth declare, that, as he had learned to forsake both wife, child, and life, for Christ's sake, so did he there-

by retain that godly care over them which becometh a true Christian.

This affection is most lively set forth in another letter, which he did write to his wife; in which (after he had admonished her that she should not resort much to the prison where he was, for danger of trouble that might ensue), he saith:—

Laurence Saunders to his Wife.

“ You shall, I think, shortly come far enough into danger, by keeping of faith and a good conscience; which, dear wife, I trust you do not slack to make reckoning and account upon, by exercising your inward man in the meditation of God’s most holy word, which is the sustenance of the soul; and also by going yourself to humble prayer: for these two things be the very means by which the members of Christ are made daily more meet to inherit his kingdom. Wherefore do this, dear wife, in earnest, without leaving off, and so shall we two, with our Christ and all his chosen children, enjoy the merry world in that everlasting immortality; whereas, here will nothing else be found but extreme misery, even of them which most greedily seek this worldly wealth; and so, if we two continue God’s children grafted into our Christ, the same God’s blessing which we receive shall also settle upon our Samuel.

Though we do shortly depart hence, and leave the poor infant (as it seemeth) at all adventures, yet shall he have our gracious God to be his God: for so hath He said which cannot lie, 'I will be thy God and the God of thy seed.' Yea, if you being called of God to do his will, either to die for the confession of Christ, or to do any work of obedience, should be compelled to leave him in the wild wilderness, destitute of all help, that God which heard the cry of that poor little infant of Hagar, Sarah's handmaid, and did succour it, will do the like to this our child, and to the child of any other which feareth God and putteth his trust in him. If we lack faith to believe this (as many times we do indeed), let us call for it, and we shall have both the increase of it, and of any other good grace needful for us. Be merry in God, dear wife, for I am very merry. O Lord! what great cause have we for rejoicing, when we think upon that kingdom which God vouchsafeth, for his Christ's sake, freely to give unto us, forsaking ourselves and following him. Dear wife, this is truly to follow him, even to 'take up our cross and follow him.' Then as we suffer with him, so shall we reign with him everlastingly. Amen; shortly, shortly," etc.

To the commendation of a true fatherly affection doth this also make not a little.

As the said master Saunders was in prison, strait charge was given to the keeper that no person should

speak with him. His wife yet came to the prison gate with her young child in her arms, to visit her husband.

The keeper, though for his charge he durst not suffer her to come into the prison, yet did he take the little babe out of her arms, and brought him unto his father. Laurence Saunders seeing him, rejoiced greatly, saying, that he rejoiced more to have such a boy, than he should if two thousand pounds were given him. Yea, if there were no other cause, for which a man of my estate should lose his life, yet who would not give it, to avouch this child to be legitimate, and his marriage to be lawful and holy.

I do, good reader, recite this saying, not only to let thee see what be thought of priests' marriage; but chiefly to let all married couples and parents learn to bear in their bosom true affections—natural, but yet seasoned with the true salt of the Spirit—unfeignedly and thoroughly mortified to do the natural works and offices of married couples and parents, so long as with their doing they may keep Christ with a free confessing faith in a conscience unsoiled. Otherwise, both they and their own lives are so to be forsaken, as Christ required them to be denied, and given in his cause.

And now to come to the examination of this good

man; after that the Bishops had kept him one whole year and a quarter in prison, at length they called him, as they did the rest of his fellows, openly to be examined. Of the which his first examination the effect and purport thus followeth.

The First Examination of Laurence Saunders.

“Praised be our gracious God who preserveth his from evil, and doth give them grace to avoid all such offences as might hinder his honour, or hurt his church. Amen.

“Being convented before the queen’s most honourable Council, sundry bishops being present, the Lord Chancellor began to speak in such form as followeth:

“*Lord Chancellor.*—‘It is not unknown, that you have been a prisoner for such abominable heresies and false doctrine as hath been sown by you; and now it is thought good that mercy be showed to such as seek for it. Wherefore if now you will show yourself conformable, and come home again, mercy is ready. We must say, that we have fallen in manner all; but now we be risen again, and returned to the catholic church: you must rise with us, and come home unto it.—Give us forthwith a direct answer.’

“*Saunders.*—‘My Lord, and my Lords all, may it please your honours to give me leave to answer with deliberation.’

“*L. Chan.*—‘Leave off your painting and pride of speech: for such is the fashion of you all, to please yourselves in your glorious words. Answer yea, or nay.’

“*Saunders.*—‘My lord, it is no time for me now to paint: and as for pride, there is no great cause why it should be in me. My learning, I confess, to be but small; and as for riches or worldly wealth, I have none at all. Notwithstanding, it standeth me in hand to answer to your demand circumspectly, considering that one of these two extreme perils is like to fall upon me: the losing of a good conscience, or the losing of this my body and life. And I tell you truth, I love both life and liberty, if I could enjoy them without the hurt of my conscience.’

“*L. Chan.*—‘Conscience! You have none at all, but pride and arrogancy, dividing yourselves by singularity from the church.’

“*Saunders.*—The Lord is the knower of all men’s consciences. And whereas your Lordship layeth to my charge this dividing myself from the church (as you do mean, and is now among you concluded upon, and I do understand), I do assure you, that I live in the faith wherein I have been brought up since I was fourteen years old: being taught that the power of the Bishop of Rome is but usurped, with many other abuses springing thereof. Yea, this I have received even at your hands that are here present, as a thing agreed upon by the Catholic church and public authority.’

“ *L. Chan.*—‘ Yea marry ; but, I pray you, have you received by consent and authority all your heresies of the blessed sacrament of the altar ?’

“ *Saunders.*—‘ My Lord, it is less offence to cut off an arm, hand, or joint of a man, than to cut off the head ; for the man may live, though he do lack an arm, hand, or joint ; and so he cannot without his head. But you all the whole sort of you, have agreed to cut off the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome, whom now you will have to be the head of your church again.’

Bishop of London.—‘ And if it like your Lordship, I have his hand against the blessed sacrament. How say you to that ?’

“ *Saunders.*—‘ What I have written, that I have written ; and further I will not accuse myself. Nothing have you to burden me withal, for breaking of your laws since they were in force.’

“ *L. Chan.*—‘ Well, you be obstinate, and refuse liberty.’

“ *Saunders.*—‘ My Lord, I may not buy liberty at such a price : but I beseech your honours to be means to the queen’s majesty for such a pardon for us, that we may live and keep our consciences unclogged, and we shall live as most obedient subjects. Otherwise, I must say for myself, that by God’s grace I will abide the most extremity that man may do against me, rather than to do against my conscience.’

L. Chan.—‘ Ah, sirrah ! you will live as you list. The Donatists did desire to live in singularity ; but in

deed they were not meet to live on earth.—No more be you, and that shall you understand within these seven days; and therefore away with him!

“*Saunders.*—‘Welcome be it, whatsoever the will of God shall be, either life or death. And I tell you truly, I have learned to die. But I exhort you to beware of shedding of innocent blood. Truly it will cry. The Spirit of God rest upon all your honours! Amen.’—This is the sum and form of my first examination. Pray, &c.”

This examination being ended, the officers led him out of the place, and so stayed until the rest of his fellows were likewise handled, that they might have them altogether to prison. Laurence Saunders, standing among the officers, seeing there a great multitude of people, opened his mouth and spake freely, warning them all of that, which, by their falling from Christ to Antichrist, they did deserve; and therefore exhorting them by repentance to rise again, and to embrace Christ with stronger faith, to confess him to the end, in the defiance of Antichrist, sin, death, and the devil: so should they retain the Lord’s favour and blessing.

The copies of his other examination and excommunication came to the hands of such as do keep them still in secret: but in them, as he defended Christ’s cause stoutly, so warned he the pharisaical bishops and papists

of their hypocrisy and tyranny freely, and cleared himself of their unjust quarrelings truly. After he was excommunicate and delivered to the secular power, he was brought by the Sheriff of London to the prison called the Compter, in his own parish of Bread Street; whereat he rejoiced greatly, both because he found there a fellow-prisoner, master Cardmaker, with whom he had christian and comfortable conference, and also because out of prison, as before out of a pulpit, he might preach to his parishioners; as by his letter hereafter shall be declared.

The 4th day of February, the Bishop of London did come to the prison, where he was, to degrade him; which when he had done, Laurence Saunders said to him, "I thank God, I am none of your church."

The day following in the morning, the Sheriff of London delivered him to certain of the Queen's guard, which were appointed to carry him to the city of Coventry, there to be burned. The first night they came to St. Alban's, where Master Grimoald (a man who had more store of good gifts than of great constancy) did speak with him.

After Master Saunders had given him a lesson meet for his lightness, he took a cup in his hand, and asked

him if he would pledge him of that cup, of which he would begin to him. Grimoald, by his shrugging and shrinking showing what he was, said, "Of that cup which is in your hand, I will pledge you: but of that other which you mean, I will not promise you." "Well," said Master Saunders, "my dear Lord Jesus Christ hath begun to me of a more bitter cup than mine shall be; and shall I not pledge my most sweet Saviour? Yes, I hope."

After they were come to Coventry, the same night a poor shoemaker, which was wont to serve him of shoes, came to him after this manner, and said, "O my good master! God strengthen and comfort you." "Gracmercies good shoemaker," quoth Master Saunders, "and I pray thee to pray for me; for I am the unmeetest man for this high office, that ever was appointed to it: but my gracious God and dear Father is able to make me strong enough." That same night he was put into the common gaol among other prisoners, where he slept little, but spent the night in prayer, and instructing of others.

The next day, which was the 8th of February, he was led to the place of execution in the park without the city, going in an old gown and a shirt, bare-footed, and

ofttimes fell flat on the ground, and prayed. When he was come nigh to the place, the officer appointed to see the execution done, said to Master Saunders, that he was one of them which marred the Queen's realm, with false doctrine and heresy, "wherefore thou hast deserved death," quoth he; "but yet, if thou wilt revoke thine heresies, the queen hath pardoned thee: if not, yonder fire is prepared for thee." To whom Master Saunders answered, "It is not I, nor my fellow-preachers of God's truth, that have hurt the queen's realm, but it is yourself, and such as you are, which have always resisted God's holy word; it is you which have and do mar the queen's realm. I do hold no heresies: but the doctrine of God, the blessed gospel of Christ, that hold I; that believe I; that have I taught; and that will I never revoke." With that, this tormentor cried "Away with him." And away from him went Master Saunders with a merry courage towards the fire. He fell to the ground, and prayed: he rose up again, and took the stake to which he should be chained, in his arms, and kissed it, saying, "Welcome the cross of Christ! welcome everlasting life!" and being fastened to the stake, and fire put to him, full sweetly he slept in the Lord.

And thus have ye the full history of Laurence Saunders, whom I may well compare to St. Laurence, or any other of the old martyrs of Christ's church; both for the fervent zeal of the truth and gospel of Christ, and the most constant patience in his suffering, as also for the cruel torments that he, in his patient body, did sustain in the flame of fire. For so his cruel enemies handled him, that they burned him with green wood, and other smothering, rather than burning fuel, which put him to much more pain, but that the grace and most plentiful consolation of Christ, who never forsaketh his servants, and gave strength to St. Laurence, and gave also patience to this Laurence, above all that his torments could work against; which well appeared by his quiet standing, and sweet sleeping in the fire, as is above declared.

And to the intent to give the reader to understand the better, what the grace of Christ worketh in his servants; and again, how feeble and weak man is of himself without this grace given from above, though he seem otherwise never so stout in himself: here, therefore, have we added to the aforesaid story of Laurence Saunders, the communication which in the beginning of his trouble was between him and Dr. Pendleton, by the

example whereof, such as stand, may learn to understand to take heed with due fear, and not to brag; to lean to the grace of the Lord, and not to presume in themselves.

A certain Communication between Laurence Saunders and Dr. Pendleton, in the beginning of Queen Mary's time.

At the change of religion in this realm, and the beginning of queen Mary's reign, Dr. Pendleton and Master Saunders, men known to the world, not only to be learned, but also earnest preachers of God's word in the time of blessed king Edward, met together in the country, where, by occasion, they were at that time, and, as the case required (by reason of the persecution that was then at hand), fell to debate what was best for them to do in so dangerous a season. Whereupon Master Saunders, whether through very frailty of his weak flesh that was loth to taste the bitter cup, though his spirit were ready thereunto; or whether it were upon the mistrust of his own strength, that he might receive the greater power from above; or whether it were not for any one of the said causes alone, but for both together, or such like; seemed so fearful and

feeble spirited, that he showed himself in appearance, like either to fall quite from God and his word, which he had taught, or at least to betake him to his heels, and to fly the land, rather than to stick to his profession, and abide by his tackle: so as Dr. Pendleton (who on the contrary side appeared not so big of body, but as bold in courage; nor so earnest before in pulpit, but as ready now to seal the same with his blood) took upon him to comfort Master Saunders all that he might; admonishing him, as he could do it very well, not to forsake cowardly his flock when he had most need to defend them from the wolf; neither, having put his hand to God's plough, to start now aside and give it over; nor yet (that is worst of all), having once forsaken Antichrist, to fall either himself, or suffer others, by his example, to return to their vomit again.

After which and such like persuasions bidding him be of good comfort, and to take a good heart unto him, "What, man!" quoth he, "there is a great deal more cause in me to be afraid than in you; forasmuch as you see, I carry a greater mass of flesh upon my back than you do, and being so laden with a heavier lump of this vile carcase, ought therefore of nature to be more frail than you: and yet," said he, "I will see the uttermost

drop of this grease of mine molten away, and the last gobbet of this pampered flesh consumed to ashes, before I will forsake God and his truth." Whereunto the other, answering but little, and wishing that Almighty God would give him more strength than he presently felt in himself, acknowledging his own weakness, consented notwithstanding, though it were somewhat faintly, to join with him in the profession of the Gospel, and so to go up to London, and set forth the same: whereupon they gave each other their hands.

Now when they were come to London, oh, what a great change was there between these two persons! The poor, feeble, faint-hearted Saunders, by the goodness of Almighty God taking heart of grace to him, seeking the same in humility, boldly and stoutly confirmed his flock out of the pulpit, where his charge lay, mightily beating down Antichrist, and lustily preaching Christ his Master; for the which he afterward suffered most willingly, as is before declared. Whereas on the other side, Pendleton the proud (who, as it appeared by the sequel, had been more stout in words than constant in deeds, and a greater bragger than a good warrior) followed Peter so justly in cracks, howsoever he did in repentance (which God only knoweth), that

he came not so soon to London but he changed his tippet, and played the "apostata;" preaching, instead of sound doctrine, nothing almost but errors and lies, advancing Antichrist, and overthrowing poor Christ with all his main: so his former boldness came to nothing, unless it were a contrary key, becoming of a faithful pastor a false runagate, and of a true preacher a sworn enemy to God's everlasting testament; to the great offence of his brethren, the hurt of his flock, and the utter undoing, without God's greater mercy, of his own soul. Wherein are specially to be considered the deep and marvellous judgments of God, who, as he can and doth make strong whom it pleaseth him, when he seeth his time, and most commonly such as appear most feeble: even so, contrariwise, throweth he down others, seem they never so stout, stand they never so much in their own conceits. Wherefore, let him that standeth take heed he fall not; and let us pray continually to Almighty God, though we have faith that he will help and increase our faith, that in him it may be made strong, which of itself is so weak, that it is soon overthrown.

This blessed man of God, enduring long time in prison, did not pass all this time in unfruitful idleness,

but still, from time to time, did visit his friends (as is said), and especially his wife, with many letters full of godly instruction and consolation.

A Letter sent to Master Ferrar, Bishop of St. David's, Doctor Taylor, Master Bradford, and Master Philpot.

“Grace, mercy, and peace in Jesus Christ our Lord, etc. Good fathers, and dear brethren, be thankful unto our most gracious God, which hath preserved us, and shall, I doubt not, from blaspheming his blessed name: yea, not only that, but also ‘Out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings, shall be set forth his praise.’ They offer us, forsooth, our liberty and pardon, so that we will rise with them into that faith, which we with them were fallen from. Yea, or no, must be answered in haste. They will not admit any needful circumstances, but all (as heretofore) most detestable and abominable. Rise with them we must unto the unity. A pardon, say I, of me must not so dearly be purchased. A pardon I desire, to live with an unclogged conscience. ‘The Donatists,’ say they, ‘sought for such singularity; but they were not meet to live in a commonwealth—no more be you, as you shall shortly understand. Wherefore away with him.’ (Yea the time was named—within this seven-night.) ‘There be twelve hours in the day. Death shall be welcome,’ said I, ‘as being

looked for long since: and yet do justice ye were best; for Abel's blood cried, ye wot what. The Spirit of God be upon you, and God save your honours.' Thus departed I from them. Pray, pray. Ah, ah! 'Puer sum, nescio loqui;' i. e. 'I am a child, I cannot speak.' My brother P. shall show you more herein. By him send me word what you have done. Fare ye well, and pray, pray. I would gladly meet with my good brother Bradford on the backside, about eleven of the clock. Before that time I cannot start out, we have such out-walkers; but then they will be at dinner.—Yours, as you know,

“LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

A Letter which Laurence Saunders did write to his Wife, and others of the faithful Flock, after his Condemnation to the Fire: written the last of January, A. D. 1555, out of the Compter in Bread Street.

“The grace of Christ, with the consolation of the Holy Ghost, to the keeping of faith and a good conscience, confirm and keep you for ever vessels to God's glory. Amen.

“Oh! what worthy thanks can be given to our gracious God for his unmeasurable mercies plentifully poured upon us? And I, most unworthy wretch, cannot but pour forth at this present, even from the bottom

of my heart, the bewailing of my great ingratitude and unkindness towards so gracious and good a God and loving Father. I beseech you all, as for my other many sins, so especially for that sin of my unthankfulness, crave pardon for me in your earnest prayers, commending me to God's great mercies in Christ.

“To number these mercies in particular, were to number the drops of water which are in the sea, the sands on the shore, the stars in the sky. O my dear wife, and ye the rest of my friends, rejoice with me, I say, rejoice with thanksgiving, for this my present promotion, in that I am made worthy to magnify my God, not only in my life, by my slow mouth and uncircumcised lips, bearing witness unto his truth, but also by my blood to seal the same, to the glory of my God, and confirming of his true church: and as yet I testify unto you, that the comfort of my sweet Christ doth drive from my fantasy the fear of death. But if my dear husband Christ doth, for my trial, leave me alone a little to myself, alas, I know in what case I shall be then: but if, for my proof, he do so, yet I am sure he will not be long or far from me. Though he stand behind the wall, and hide himself (as Solomon saith in his mystical ballet), yet will he peep in by a crevice to see how I do. He is a very tender-hearted Joseph. Though he speak roughly to his brethren, and handle them hardly; yea, threaten grievous bondage to his best beloved brother Benjamin, yet can he not contain himself from weeping

with us and upon us, with falling on our necks, and sweetly kissing us. Such, such a brother is our Christ unto us all. Wherefore hasten to go unto him, as Jacob did with his sons and family, leaving their country and acquaintance. Yea, this our Joseph hath obtained for us, that Pharaoh the infidel shall minister unto us chariots, wherein at ease we may be carried, to come unto him; as we have experience how our very adversaries do help us unto our everlasting bliss by their speedy despatch, yea, and how all things have been helpings hereunto, blessed be our God! Be not afraid of fray-bugs which lie in the way. Fear rather the everlasting fire: fear the serpent which hath that deadly sting, of which by bodily death they shall be brought to taste, which are not grafted in Christ, wanting faith and a good conscience; and so are not acquainted with Christ the killer of death. But oh, my dear wife and friends! we, we whom God hath delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, by putting off the old man, and by faith putting on the new, even our Lord Jesus Christ, his wisdom, holiness, righteousness and redemption; we, I say, have to triumph against the terrible spiteful serpent the devil, sin, hell, death, and damnation. For Christ, our brazen serpent, hath pulled away the sting of this serpent, so that now we may boldly, in beholding it spoiled of its sting, triumph; and with our Christ, and all his elect, say, 'Death,

where is thy sting? Hell, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who hath given (us) the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ!

“Wherefore be merry, my dear wife, and all my dear fellow-heirs of the everlasting kingdom, always remember the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, continue in prayer; and pray for us now appointed to the slaughter, that we may be unto our heavenly Father a fat offering, and an acceptable sacrifice. I may hardly write to you: wherefore let these few words be a witness of my commendations to you and all them which love us in the faith; and namely, unto my flock, among whom I am resident, by God’s providence, but as a prisoner.

“And although I am not so among them, as I have been, to preach to them out of a pulpit, yet doth God now preach unto them by me, by this my imprisonment and captivity which now I suffer among them for Christ’s gospel’s sake; bidding them to beware of the Romish antichristian religion and kingdom; requiring and charging them to abide in the truth of Christ, which is shortly to be sealed with the blood of their pastor, who, though he be unworthy of such a ministry, yet Christ their high Pastor is to be regarded, whose truth hath been taught them by me, is witnessed by my chains, and shall be by my death, through the power of that high Pastor, who thus feedeth them by me. Give to Mistress G. understanding of these my

commendations, who will I know salute all the rest in my name with them.

“Be not careful, good wife; cast your care upon the Lord, and commend me unto him in repentant prayer, as I do you and our Samuel; whom, even at the stake, I will offer as myself unto God. Fare ye well all in Christ, in hope to be joined with you in joy everlasting: this hope is put up in my bosom.—Amen, Amen, Amen! Praised be the Lord. Pray, Pray!”

Another Letter to Mrs. Lucy Harrington, a godly Gentlewoman, and friendly to him in his Troubles.

“Your most gentle commendations, whereof this messenger made remembrance unto me, were for two causes very comfortable: first, for that hereby I understood of the state of your health and bodily welfare, for the which I give thanks unto God, who grant the long continuance thereof to his honour and fatherly good will; whereunto I will daily say, Amen! And further, I was refreshed by the expressing of your mindful friendship towards me far unworthy thereof. Wherein I take occasion of much rejoicing in our so gracious a God and merciful Father, who, as he hath in his immeasurable mercy, by faith, hand-fasted us his chosen children unto his dear Son our Christ, as the spiritual spouse of such a heavenly husband; so he linketh us by love one unto another, being by that bond compact together with

charitable readiness to do good one to another; so that first to the glory of our God and his Christ, then to our own joining in the testimony of a good conscience, and, last of all, to the stopping of the mouths and confusion of our adversaries, we bear the badge, as the right spouse of our Christ, which he himself noted in this saying: 'Herein shall all men know that ye be my disciples, if we love one another.' Then further, by this bond of mutual love is set forth the fatherly providence of God towards us his children; that though it be he that careth for us—in whom we live, move, and be—who feedeth all flesh with bodily sustenance—yet hath he appointed us, in these present necessities, to stand in his stead one unto another. Wherein is not only set forth our dignity, but also that unspeakable accord and unity among us, the many members of his mystical body. And though that either for lack of ability, or else through distance of place, power and opportunity of helping one another do fail: yet wonderful is the working of God's children through the Spirit of prayer, as whereby they fetch all heavenly influence from Christ their celestial head by his Spirit, to be measured severally, as may serve to the maintenance of the whole body.

“Thus doth our faithful prayer, which we make one for another, distribute and scatter God's bountiful blessings, both ghostly and bodily, when ordinary ability lacketh, and when the arm may not reach forth such God's riches. According hereunto I well perceive and

understand your readiness to do good unto all; and especially I have experience of your ready good-will towards me, in your hearty desire to stretch out your helping hand to relieve my lack: and of your help to be extended to me in the other spiritual sort, by your good prayer, I doubt not; as I also therein assure you of my help, being all that I may do, and yet the same not so much as I would do.

“My need concerning bodily necessities is as yet furnished by God’s provision, so that I am not driven to any extremity, wherefore to be burdenous to you, as your gentle benevolence provoketh me: the Lord reward you there-for! If God make me worthy to be his witness at this present, in giving this corruptible body to burn for the testimony of his truth, it is enough for me to say to you, that I have a poor wife and child, whom I love in the Lord, and whom I know, for my sake, you will tender when I am departed hence,” etc.

Another Letter to Mistress Lucy Harrington.

“Grace and mercy, etc. It happeneth oftentimes that abundance of matter, bringing with it much vehemency of friendly affection, maketh men dumb; and even then chiefly, when there is most eager purpose of speaking, silence doth suppress, and causeth the party so affected imperfectly to express, that he goeth about to utter. Such impediment by much matter, mingled with fervency of affection, feel I sometimes in myself,

letting the utterance, either by tongue or writing, of the abundance of the heart. The love of our most gracious God and heavenly Father, bestowed upon us in the merits of Christ our Saviour, who may, by conceit of mind, comprehend? passing indeed all understanding! much less may the same by any means be expressly uttered. And as such heavenly blessings, which by faith we fetch from above, be inexplicable, so is it hard to utter, when the faithful are set on fire by love, their readiness to reach forth and to give by charity, as by faith they have received. But (alas!) we carry this treasure in earthen vessels. Many times faith is feeble, and then love loseth her fervor. Pray we therefore, 'Lord increase our faith,' and love forthwith will be on fire. And immortal thanks be given unto our God, who in our Christ hath bestowed upon us the first-fruits of his Spirit, who crieth in our hearts, 'Abba, Father.' And (as St. Paul saith), 'Seeing we have the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written; I believed, and therefore I have spoken: we also believe, and therefore we speak.' Yea, God knoweth, this Spirit putteth in us a mind to speak; but in attempting thereof we are driven with Moses to say, 'O Lord! I am slow-mouthed, and of uncircumcised lips:' and with Jeremiah, 'O Lord, I cannot speak.'

"Albeit that this infancy restraineth the opening of such abundance of heart in my tender Christian duty to be declared towards you, yet I beseech you, let this be settled in your understanding; that, as St. Paul ex-

presseth unto his Corinthians, that they were in his heart either to live or to die, with many other such sayings uttered unto them and the Galatians, expressing his vehement affection towards them: so, in some part, I would be like affected towards all God's children, and especially towards you whom I know in Christ, and to whom I will not say how much I am indebted. I thank you for your great friendship and tender goodwill towards my wife: yea, that good gracious God recompense you, which may worthily with the more countervail the same, and fulfil that which lacketh of thankful duty in us. And because of that which heretofore I have conceived of you, and of your more than natural love towards me and mine; I make myself thus bold to lay this burden upon you, even the care and charge of my said poor wife; I mean, to be unto her a mother and mistress, to rule and direct her by your discreet council. I know she conceiveth of you the same that I do, and is thankful unto God with me for such a friend; and therefore I beseech you for Christ's sake, put never from you this friendly charge over her, whether I live longer, or shortly depart. But to charge you otherwise, thanks be to God, neither I, neither she, have any such extreme need: if we had, I would be as bold with you as with mine own mother. I beseech you give my hearty salutations unto Master Fitz-Williams, and my good lady; with thanks also for my poor wife and child. The Lord recompense them!

“LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

Furthermore, as touching his fatherly care and affection to his wife and his little child, the same is lively set forth in another letter which he did write to his wife; wherein he admonished her that she would not resort much to the prison where he was, for danger of trouble that might ensue; the tenor of whose letter here followeth.

Another Letter to his Wife, with a certain Remembrance to Master Harrington and Master Hurland.

“Grace and comfort, etc.—Wife, you shall do best not to come often unto the grate where the porter may see you. Put not yourself in danger where it needs not. You shall, I think, shortly come far enough into danger by keeping faith and a good conscience; which, dear wife, I trust you do not slack to make reckoning and account upon, by exercising your inward man in meditation of God’s most holy word, being the sustenance of the soul, and also by giving yourself to humble prayer: for these two things be the very means how to be made members of our Christ, meet to inherit his kingdom.

“Do this, dear wife, in earnest, and not leaving off; and so we two shall, with our Christ and all his chosen children, enjoy the merry world in that everlasting immortality; whereas here, will nothing else be found but extreme misery, even of them which most greedily seek this worldly wealth. And so, if we two continue God’s

children grafted in our Christ, the same God's blessing which we receive, shall also settle upon our Samuel. Though we do shortly depart hence, and leave the poor infant (to our seeming) at all adventures, yet shall he have our gracious God to be his God: for so hath he said, and he cannot lie, 'I will be thy God,' saith he, 'and the God of thy seed.' Yea, if you leave him in the wilderness, destitute of all help, being called of God to do his will, either to die for the confession of Christ, or any work of obedience; that God which heard the cry of the little poor infant of Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, and did succour it, will do the like to the child of you or any other fearing him, and putting your trust in him.

“And if we lack faith, as we do indeed many times let us call for it, and we shall have the increase both of it, and also of any other good grace needful for us: and be merry in God, in whom also I am very merry and joyful. O Lord, what great cause of rejoicing have we to think upon that kingdom, which he voucheth safe for his Christ's sake, freely to give us, forsaking ourselves and following him? Dear wife, this is truly to follow him; even to take up our cross and follow him, and then, as we suffer with him, so shall we reign with him everlastingly, shortly. Amen.”

Another Letter to his Wife, to Master Robert Harrington and Master Hurland, and other Friends.

“Grace and comfort, etc.—Dear wife, rejoice in our gracious God, and his and our Christ; and give thanks most humbly and heartily to him for this day’s work; that in any part I, most unworthy wretch, should be made worthy to bear witness unto his everlasting verity, which Antichrist, with his, by main force (I perceive) and by most impudent pride and boasting, will go about to suppress. Remember God alway, my dear wife; and so shall God’s blessing light upon you and your Samuel. O remember always my words for Christ’s sake; be merry, and grudge not against God; and pray, pray. We be all merry here, thanks be unto our God, who, in his Christ, hath given us great cause to be merry; by whom he hath prepared for us such a kingdom, and doth and will give unto us some little taste thereof, even in this life, and to all such as are desirous to take it. ‘Blessed,’ saith our Christ, ‘be they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for such shall be satisfied.’ Let us go, yea, let us run, to seek such treasure, and that with whole purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord, to find such riches in his heavenly word through his Spirit obtained by prayer. My dear friends and brethren, Master Harrington and Master Hurland, pray, pray. ‘The spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak.’ When I look upon myself, being astonished and confounded, what have I else to say but those words of

Peter, 'Lord, go from me ; for I am a sinful man.' But then feel I that sweet comfort, 'The word of the Lord is a lanthron unto my feet, and a light unto my paths,' and 'this is my comfort in my trouble.' Then wax I bold with the same Peter to say, 'Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of everlasting life.' This comfort have I when the giver thereof doth give it. But I look for battles, which the root of unfaithfulness, the which I feel in me, will most eagerly give unto my conscience, when we come once to the combat. We be (I ween) within the sound of the trump of our enemies. Play, ye that be abroad, the part of Moses, 'praying in all places, lifting up pure hands ;' and God's people shall prevail : yea, our blood shall be their perdition, who do most triumphantly spill it. And we then, being in the hands of our God, shall shine in his kingdom, and shall stand in great steadfastness against them which have dealt extremely with us. And when these our enemies shall thus see us, they shall be vexed with horrible fear, and shall wonder at the hastiness of the sudden health ; and shall say with themselves, having inward sorrow and mourning for very anguish of mind : 'These are they whom we sometime had in derision, and jested upon. We fools thought their lives to be very madness, and their end to be without honour ; but lo ! how they are accounted among the children of God.'—The blessing of God be with you all, etc.

“LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

To his Wife a little before his Burning.

“Grace and comfort in Christ, Amen.—Dear wife, be merry in the mercies of our Christ, and also ye, my dear friends. Pray, pray for us, everybody. We be shortly to be despatched hence unto our good Christ; Amen, Amen. Wife, I would you send me my shirt, which you know whereunto it is consecrated. O my heavenly Father, look upon me in the face of thy Christ, or else I shall not be able to abide thy countenance; such is my filthiness. He will do so; and therefore I will not be afraid what sin, death, hell, and damnation can do against me. O wife! always remember the Lord. God bless you, yea, he will bless thee, good wife, and thy poor boy also. Only cleave thou unto him, and he will give thee all things. Pray, pray, pray!”

Another Letter to Masters Robert and John Glover, written the same Morning that he was Burnt.

“Grace and consolation in our sweet Saviour Christ.—O my dear brethren, whom I love in the Lord, being loved of you also in the Lord, be merry and rejoice for me, now ready to go up to that mine inheritance, which I myself indeed am most unworthy of, but my dear Christ is worthy, who hath purchased the same for me with so dear a price. Make haste, my dear brethren, to come unto me, that we may be merry, with that joy

which no man shall take from us. O wretched sinner that I am ; not thankful unto this my Father, who hath vouched me worthy to be a vessel unto his honour. But, O Lord, now accept my thanks, though they proceed out of a not-enough-circumcised heart. Salute my good sisters your wives ; and, good sisters, fear the Lord. Salute all others that love us in the truth. God's blessing be with you always, Amen. Even now towards the offering of a burnt sacrifice. O my Christ, help, or else I perish !

“ LAURENCE SAUNDERS.”

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