

LIFE
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM JENKYN,
ONE OF THE EJECTED MINISTERS IN 1662.

WILLIAM JENKYN, one of the ejected ministers on the celebrated English St. Bartholomew's Day, presents, in the incidents of his eventful life, a subject for biography strikingly illustrative of that remarkable period in the history of the Church of Christ in England. His grandfather, William Jenkyn of Folkestone, Esquire, was a gentleman possessed of considerable landed property in Kent, and strongly attached to the established system of polity, and to what is styled the high church party, of the Church of England. He was possessed of considerable influence, from his wealth and connections, and having early designed his son, the father of the subject of our memoir, for some valuable church preferment, he sent him to the University of Cambridge, to complete his studies, and prepare for taking orders in the church.

The young student proceeded to the University, prepared to follow out his father's scheme, and to qualify himself for assuming the sacred office of the ministry, with all its solemn responsibilities, from no higher motive than that of securing a comfortable maintenance for life. When there, however, circumstances transpired which produced a remarkable change on his views, and exercised a permanent influence on his future course of life. It was his fortune to be led by Providence to attend on the ministry of Mr. Perkins, a devout preacher in Cambridge, who adhered to the

Puritan Nonconformists. The consequence of this step was speedily manifested by a remarkable change in his views on the nature and value of religion. He learned to see the deep importance of the office of the ministry, which he had been so thoughtlessly seeking to assume, and to take a solemn view of the nature of the Christian profession, which he had heretofore regarded as little more than a necessary form of qualification for the political and professional status he was desirous to acquire.

He pursued his studies with new energy and zeal, under this striking change of views, while his intercourse was almost entirely confined to the despised Nonconformists, among whom he had first learned the true nature of the Christian profession.

On his return to Folkestone, at the close of the University term, his father was highly offended on discovering the change of views in his son, and after in vain seeking, by means of every available argument and threat, to wean him from his attachment to the Puritans, and from the religious views he had adopted, he at length disinherited him, alienating from him nearly all the estate and fortune which he was entitled to succeed to. Young Jenkyn, however, had not taken so decided a step without seriously counting the cost; and, "looking for another and a better inheritance," he bade farewell to the paternal roof. Retiring to Wethersfield, he there put himself under the guidance and direction of Mr. Richard Rogers, an aged Puritan divine, and a near descendant of John Rogers, the proto-martyr in the Marian persecution. It is not our intention, however, to follow out minutely the incidents of this good man's life. He diligently prosecuted his studies at Wethersfield, and, being in due time ordained to the office of the ministry, he was soon after appointed as minister of Sudbury, in Suffolk, where, says his biographer, Dr. Calamy, "he was signally useful to many, by preaching and catechising, and he adorned all by a holy conversation." Soon after his settlement at Sudbury, he married the grand-daughter of John Rogers, the eminent martyr already referred to, who so nobly witnessed a good confession, in the first years of "bloody Mary's" in-

tolerant reign. The fruit of this union was William Jenkyn, the subject of the present biographical sketch, who was born at Sudbury in the year 1612.

! We cannot but view with interest the offspring of such parents; William Jenkyn was truly the seed of the righteous, and his after-life abundantly proved that the many promises of Scripture were fulfilled in him. His father died while he was still an infant, leaving him to the sole care of a pious mother. But on his grandfather learning of the death of the son whom he had disinherited, he was filled with poignant grief and remorse, and, sending for his little grandson to Folkestone, he promised to undertake the charge of his education and future prospects in life, doubtless with the view of reinstating him in the inheritance from which his father had been excluded. The child soon gained on his grandfather's affections, already softened by his regretful remembrances of his lost son, whom he had banished from the paternal roof. He continued to reside with him till the ninth year of his age, receiving, during that time, many tokens of the love with which he was regarded; but at the end of that time, his mother, who had married a second time, became apprehensive of the influence of worldly society and example on his young mind, and fearing the want of a religious education, she recalled him home, to the great displeasure of his grandfather.

In his new sphere, young Jenkyn's attention was speedily directed to the acquirement of such knowledge as was suited to his age. He soon exhibited proofs of very superior mental capacity. He made such rapid advances in his studies at school, that he was sent, at the age of fourteen, to complete his education at the University of Cambridge. "He pursued his studies," says Dr. Calamy, in his "Non-conformist Memorial," "with great success, and his progress in piety was as eminent as in learning. His company was earnestly courted by some young wits of the University, for his sprightly genius; but perceiving their looseness, he waived an intimacy with them." He continued diligently to cultivate the advantages then enjoyed at that eminent seat of learning, until he received from the University the

honourable degree of Master of Arts, and was ordained a minister of the Church of England.

Mr. Jenkyn did not immediately enter on the work of the ministry after the completion of his studies at Cambridge. His preaching, however, appears to have very early proved acceptable to his auditors, and soon after his first appearance in public, he was chosen lecturer of St. Nicholas Acons, London; and from thence was called to Hithe, near Colchester, in Essex, where he first married. He did not long remain at Hithe. The low and marshy ground which abounds in the neighbourhood of that place, and the general character of the district, where agues, and other diseases of a similar nature, were rendered prevalent by the dampness of the soil, so greatly affected his health, as to interfere with his usefulness, and at the earnest solicitation of his friends in London, he returned to town. Soon after his arrival there, he was chosen minister of Christ's Church in the city, and some months afterwards he also received the appointment of lecturer of St. Ann's, Blackfriars. It was the misfortune, however, of this good man to suffer in all the great changes of that eventful period, and, while quietly pursuing his duties as a faithful minister of the Gospel, to be involved in the political changes which then agitated and distracted the commonwealth. He continued for a time to fulfil the double duties which had devolved on him, with great diligence and acceptance, till the Parliamentary leaders had successfully achieved their triumph over the rash and headstrong king, Charles I. One of the first steps adopted by the Parliament thereafter, was to order a public thanksgiving to be observed throughout the kingdom, and as Mr. Jenkyn could not reconcile this to his conscience, he was soon after suspended from his ministry, and had his benefice of Christ's Church sequestered. To this he submitted without a murmur, withdrawing to a quiet retirement at Billericay, in Essex.

After a time, when he believed the excitement to have subsided, he ventured on returning to London. But the sacrifice he had already made from conscientious motives, had rendered him an object of suspicion to the men in

power. He was seized a few months after his return, on suspicion of being concerned in one of the numerous conspiracies which then threatened the government, and which is known as Love's plot. In consequence of this he was sent a prisoner to the Tower. There he drew up a petition and remonstrance to Parliament, setting forth the wrongs and injustice he had suffered, and so strong was the effect produced by his eloquent appeal, that he was not only released from prison, but an immediate discharge of the sequestration by which he had been ejected from Christ's Church was ordered by Parliament. It seems somewhat strange that, after such an effectual interference on his behalf, any difficulty should have been felt as to his immediate restoration to his benefice. But such was his moderation, that finding the government had followed up his sequestration by appointing one Mr. Feak in his place, he forbore to adopt any means for ejecting the new minister from Christ's Church. The parishioners, however, were not so easily satisfied; they were warmly attached to him, and earnestly desirous for his return to labour among them, and accordingly, when they found him disinclined to attempt any means for his own restoration to the charge, they established a morning lectureship for him, and voluntarily raised a liberal subscription to secure his maintenance. Doubtless the good man found in these voluntary manifestations of love to him, and satisfaction in his ministrations, an abundant reward for all that he had suffered for conscience-sake. Meanwhile he resumed his lectureship at Blackfriars, which, being in the appointment of the people, had been retained for him after his ejection, and, on the death of Dr. Gouge soon after, who was the incumbent of the church, Mr. Jenkyn was appointed to succeed him.

Towards the close of the Protectorate, a religious sect made its appearance in England under the name of Fifth Monarchy Men, and contrived by the extravagance of their tenets, and the unrestrained violence of their proceedings, both to create much disorder, and to furnish a handle against the Puritan party and all who had shown themselves favourable to religion, however opposed they had been to the ex-

travagances of such enthusiasts. The distinguishing tenet of these men was a belief in the coming of a fifth universal monarchy, of which Jesus Christ was to be the Head, while the saints, under his personal sovereignty, should possess the earth. Their tenets were incompatible with any form of government, while they did not hesitate to rise in arms to assert their claims. Many of them suffered imprisonment and death after the restoration, on accusation of treason, and plots to murder the Duke of York and the King; most of which, however, rested on very insufficient evidence. One of the earliest among the London ministers who joined these enthusiasts, was Mr. Feak, the successor of Mr. Jenkyn, after his ejection from Christ's Church; the consequence of which was, that he in his turn became obnoxious to the government, and was removed from his charge. The appointment at that time rested with the governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, who accordingly presented Mr. Jenkyn anew to his former charge. Here he exercised the office of the ministry to crowded congregations, and with eminent success, for some years, until the restoration of Charles II. and the publication of the Act of Uniformity, when he who had been among the first to suffer for his refusal to renounce the allegiance he had conceived due to Charles I., was equally subjected to pains and penalties as a Nonconformist, on the restoration of his son.

With the same upright fidelity which he had exhibited on every previous trial, he at once resigned his living rather than sin against his conscience. "He was not satisfied, however," says one of his biographers, "to desist from the ministry upon the Act of Uniformity, though he could not comply with the terms of it, but still preached in private as he had the opportunity. Upon the Oxford Act being passed, not being able to take the oath, he retired to his own house at Longley, in Hertfordshire, and preached there every Lord's day, where, through the good providence of God he met with little disturbance."

On the issue of the Act of Indulgence in 1671, one of the few acts of toleration that marked the disgraceful reign of Charles II., Mr. Jenkyn returned to London, and again

resumed his labours as a minister of the Gospel. His reception by his former parishioners was characterized by the same hearty and affectionate welcome, as when he returned to them from the dungeons of the Tower. A meeting-house was speedily erected for him in Jewin Street, by their united exertions, and a numerous and attached congregation soon gathered around him. As a still further proof of the acceptable nature of his labours, he was soon after chosen as lecturer at Pinner's Hall, in addition to his ordinary duties at the new meeting-house.

This pleasing state of things, however, was not of long duration. The spirit of persecution was powerful in the licentious court of Charles; and none were more obnoxious to the agents of intolerance than those whose exemplary virtues and unobtrusive piety formed a constant, though silent rebuke on the lawless vices of those who tended on the sovereign. The Indulgence was speedily revoked. Charles had in vain striven to accomplish his own ends under the name of constitutional forms, but, even as his father had done, he discovered, when too late, that every successive Parliament was less pliable than the one that had preceded it, and he dissolved the last of them, which had been summoned to meet at Oxford on the 28th of March 1681, after it had sat only a week. From that time Charles governed without Parliaments, and after the most arbitrary manner; nor were the Nonconformists long without feeling the full weight of his despotic rule.

After the revocation of the Indulgence, there had been so far a connivance, that Mr. Jenkyn continued to preach every Sabbath in his meeting-house without being disturbed, but, in 1682, a terrible persecution broke out. From that time he was compelled to abandon his congregation, and the stated services of the Lord's day, contenting himself with preaching from place to place where he could do it most secretly and out of the reach of the informers, a vile set of miscreants, who subsisted on the reward of their treachery in betraying the preachers to whose meetings they could obtain access. Mr. Jenkyn continued this precarious and most harassing system of labour among the Nonconformists of

England for a period of two years, during the whole of which time he escaped every search, and successfully avoided exciting the notice of those who were actively engaged in "haling men and women to prison," for no other crime than that of preaching and hearing the truth. But at length, on September 2, 1684, the faithful public labours of this devoted servant of Christ, which had been so long shackled and hindered in their operations by the persecution of the intolerant government that had then succeeded to power, were summarily brought to a close. Mr. Jenkyn had withdrawn to spend the day in prayer, along with a number of Christian friends, who mourned over the decay of piety in the land, and earnestly longed for the enjoyment of that social and public worship which was now denied them. Among those who had assembled on this occasion, were Mr. Reynolds, Mr. John Flavel, and Mr. Keeling, all eminent Nonconformist ministers. The place which they had chosen to assemble in, was a secluded upper room, where they considered themselves safe from observation and danger. Some spy, however, had got notice of their meeting, and they had not long assembled, when their devotions were interrupted by an alarm of pursuit; the soldiers burst in upon the affrighted assembly, and nothing was thought of but instant flight.

All the ministers who were present at this meeting effected their escape, excepting Mr. Jenkyn; and we owe the narrative of his capture to the diary of Mr. Flavel, who was near enough, at the time he was seized, to hear the insolence of the officers and soldiers to him after his apprehension. From his account, it appears that the native courtesy and gentleness of Mr. Jenkyn had triumphed over even the natural desire for his own safety at this trying moment, and to this he owed his capture. When he reached the private stair by which the other ministers had escaped, he observed a lady hastening to profit by the same mode of egress, when he immediately drew back, and allowed her to precede him. She was dressed, according to the fashion of the time, with a flowing train, which, from the state of trepidation in which she then was, she had not the presence of mind to gather

up over her arm. In consequence of this, the narrow passage was impeded, Mr. Jenkyn got entangled with the skirts of her robe, and before he could get down the stairs, the soldiers were upon him.

He was immediately carried before two aldermen, Sir James Edwards and Sir James Smith, who were known to be subservient tools to the Court, and by them he was treated with extreme rudeness, knowing that such conduct would be acceptable to those in power. The well-known test, styled the Oxford Oath, was immediately tendered to him, and, on his declining it, he was summarily committed to Newgate, although he offered the fine of £10, which the law empowered them to take, and it was urged for him at the time, that such was the state of his health, that the air of Newgate would infallibly prove fatal to him. Soon after his seclusion in the dungeon of that felon's prison, he began to experience the terrible effects he had dreaded, and he presented a petition to the King for release, which was backed by an assurance from his physicians, that his life was in danger from his rigorous imprisonment. But no other answer could be obtained than this: "Jenkyn shall be a prisoner as long as he lives!" so malignant was the feeling entertained against this humble and unoffending minister of the Gospel. This declaration was rigorously adhered to the last, for he was not suffered even to go to baptize his daughter's child, though a large sum was offered for that liberty, with security for his return to prison. So violent, indeed, was the spirit of persecution that animated his captors, that the jailors were ordered not to let him pray in company with any visitors; and even when his daughter came to ask his blessing, he was not allowed to pray with her.

Soon after his confinement, his health began to decline; but he continued all along in the utmost joy and comfort of soul. He said to one of his friends, "What a vast difference is there between this and my first imprisonment! Then I was full of doubts and fears, of grief and anguish; and well I might, for going out of God's way and my own calling to meddle with things that did not belong to me.

But now, being found in the way of my duty, in my Master's business, though I suffer even to bonds, yet I am comforted beyond measure. The Lord sheds abroad his love sensibly in my heart. I feel it, I have the assurance of it." Then, turning to some who were weeping by him, he said, "Why weep ye for me? Christ lives: he is my Friend; a Friend born for adversity; a Friend that never dies. Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

He died in Newgate, January 19, 1685, aged 72, having been a prisoner there four months; where, as he said a little before his death, a man might be as effectually murdered as at Tyburn. A nobleman having heard of his happy release, said to the king, "May it please your Majesty, Jenkyn has got his liberty." Upon which he asked, with eagerness, "Aye, who gave it him?" The nobleman replied, "A greater than your Majesty, the King of kings;" with which the King seemed greatly struck, and remained silent. Mr. Jenkyn was buried by his friends with great honour, at Bunhill-fields, where he has a tombstone, (erected in 1715,) with a Latin inscription, which states his having been imprisoned in Newgate, and that he died a martyr, in the 52d year of his ministry.

Mr. Jenkyn's daughter is described by his biographer as "a high-spirited, though a very worthy and pious woman." She justly regarded her father as a martyr to the cause of truth and liberty of conscience. On the occasion of his funeral, she distributed mourning-rings to his particular friends, on which she had caused this pointed motto to be engraved: "Mr. William Jenkyn, murdered in Newgate." He is the author of an exposition on the Epistle of Jude, in two quarto volumes, now very rare, besides various works connected with the controversies of the time, one of which is written in Latin, and was esteemed, even by his opponents, a work of great learning and ability