

The Church Guardian

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SPECIAL NOTICE.

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

FEBRUARY	1.—SEPTUAGESIMA.
"	2.—PURIFICATION OF VIRGIN MARY.
"	8.—SEXAGESIMA.
"	15.—QUINQUAGESIMA.
"	18.—ASH WEDNESDAY.
"	22.—First Sunday in Lent.
"	24.—St. Matthias, Ap. and M.
"	25.—EMBER DAY.
"	27.—EMBER DAY.
"	28.—EMBER DAY.

Second Sunday in Lent.

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Thess. v. 23.

Such is the prayer of the Apostle, and such would appear to be the blessing the Church teaches, and encourages us this day to pray for that we may be kept outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls. The spiritual fast of the Christian is one that mortifies the flesh and cultivates the spirit. Whatsoever subdues the one to the other is the fitting occupation of this holy season. The collect proposes to us for our consideration: first, our own helplessness. We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; we are not therefore to ascribe to any ordinance value as a meritorious rite; that is, no ordinance, however wisely appointed, is an end, but only a means to edification or sanctification. We are thus warned against trusting in fasting, or abstinence, or any other means, save only as it conduces to an end; and taught through a knowledge of our own helplessness to refer everything to God; "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God." Our prayer then is, that He, who is thus all-sufficient, would keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls, that the body be defended from adversity and the soul from evil thoughts. The health of the one, and the purity of the other, are the peculiar objects of attention during these weeks of preparatory humiliation. In the Epistle, there is selected for our instruction an exhortation of the Apostle which abounds with sound rules and heavenly principles. He both beseeches and exhorts us, "that as we have received how we ought to walk, so would we abound more and more." "The will of God is our sanctification." "That every one of us should know how to pos-

sess His vessel in sanctification and honour." "For God has not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." Abstinence from every uncleanness of the body is the leading subject of this exhortation, and fulfils the requirement of the collect, that we keep ourselves, through God's grace, not only inwardly in our souls, but also outwardly in our bodies, that the temple of God be not defiled. The subject thus brought before us, requires of us a system of self-examination more suited to private communings with the heart, the seat of evil, than to public exhortation. The cleansing of the temple requires that every avenue be cleansed; that each sin, according as it most easily besets us, be rebuked; and our first work, before we commence bringing the body into subjection, is to root out all evil propensities, all lurking uncleanness, for until these be removed fully and effectually, it is in vain that we endeavour to sweep and garnish. We are not in a state to receive the spiritual strength God vouchsafes to us, until the body, carefully cleansed from its polluting sins, is fit to be the temple in which He has promised to dwell with them who are pure in heart. Having then no power of ourselves to help ourselves, how may this be done? The Gospel answers us,—through faith and prayer; these are the weapons with which we shall be enabled to resist the assailer. Christ "was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel," and yet to faith and fervent prayer he waived all points of minor consideration, and in proportion as her faith was great and her prayer earnest, yielded to the petition of the woman of Canaan. Thus, then, let us learn from these collective services, that the first step in our course of spiritual holiness is putting away from us all uncleanness. We cannot do this of ourselves, but it is to supply our deficiencies that the Gospel is given us, and we see in the passage under consideration, how the prayer of faith prevailed in the instance of the woman of Canaan. The end, then, that we are to strive to attain, is the sanctification both of the body and the spirit, that we may be kept outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls: the means by which this is to be attained,—faith and fervent prayer; that knowing, through God's mercy, how we ought to walk, we may abound more and more; that sanctified wholly by the very God of peace, our whole spirit, soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Guidance of Readers.

A few years ago, the proposal was seriously made to establish in colleges professorships of books and reading. There were, no doubt, good reasons why this proposition fell to the ground, and yet we are sure that some very good arguments might be advanced in its favor. As matters stand at present, immature readers are, for the most part, turned loose to browse at random in the vast and varied fields of literature. We make a great effort to create a taste for reading, and that being accomplished, we seem to think that our work is done. But is it of no consequence *how* or *what* our boys and girls read? They may have tastes that are good and proper which will lead them to a choice of the right kind of books, but even that is not enough.

The young reader who knows what he needs to learn is unquestionably in advance of one who has no taste and no desire for any special knowledge;

but even *he* stands in need of constant guidance, to save him from wandering or dissipating his time in fruitless channels. In the midst of a large collection of books he will be lost and know not which way to turn. Let him be met at this point by a person who knows what books he needs and how to use them, and he will find both pleasure and profit in investigations that had before appeared like dreary groping in a pathless labyrinth.

Our experience leads us to believe that most young people fail to receive this guidance at the time when they most require it, when their minds are most open to receive impressions from without and most tenacious to retain them. In many of our colleges the systematic study of Belles-lettres or literature is postponed to the latter part of the collegiate course, when the student's habits of reading or of neglecting to read are somewhat settled, when, too, his time to profit by advice is limited. It would be well that the freshman in college be attended to in this respect during his very first term, and that in a systematic way.

The subject, however, is one which cannot be restricted to the participants of college life, who form a comparatively small portion of the youth of our land. Every teacher in our schools should regard it as an essential part of his work to drop hints regarding the reading appropriate to each particular branch of study and to each pupil's turn of mind. Parents, too, need to be reminded of their responsibility in this respect. We live in a reading age. Our children will read, and it is of the utmost importance that they be guided to that which is *intellectually sound* and *morally pure*, and taught to avoid the opposite.

The subject appeals to us from two aspects. As citizens, we desire to have the rising generation bred up to correct mental habits and tastes, and taught to read such books as will qualify them to take their part as good and useful members of the State. If we permit them to be *self* directed in their reading, the chances are ten to one that they will be *misdirected*. They will take up the books that are the most convenient to obtain, and that require the least mental application to master their contents, or will, too probably, be satisfied with those sensational papers, printed for the debauchment of the young, which are displayed, with all the attractiveness of the engraver's art, at every street corner.

There is, however, a higher point of view than that of the citizen. As *Christians and Churchmen*, we desire to see the young trained to love the good, the true, and the beautiful. The subject comes home to every pastor and Sunday-school teacher, and their influence may be, and in many instances is, made very powerful for good. The Church demands that this influence be used for her benefit. There is a vast body of literature produced by Churchmen, of which we are justly proud, that ought to be familiar to those who are presently to enter upon the stern duties of life. It is adapted to breed strong men, men of character, who shall be a credit to their country and helpers to the cause of Christ.

There is truth in the familiar maxim that "Knowledge is power," but let us not forget that it is power for *good or evil*, according as it is well or ill directed. There is little need to plead for knowledge in this age of intense mental activity and keen competition in every walk of life. But we urge most earnestly for a well-directed knowledge at a time when every effort seems to be put forth to give the