



CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, EPHESUS.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

BY THE EDITOR.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

MANY useful thoughts come to us when we review the last book of the Bible, which is unquestionably a wonderful book. Its name of Apocalypse or Revelation would alone indicate that. It professes to be an account given by our Lord Himself of things which were "shortly to take place." In fact the words of the book are, to a great extent, the words of the Lord Jesus. In the case of the messages to the Churches of Asia, found in its opening chapters, they are entirely so. And this is not always realized. To some, when they begin to study the book, the realization of this comes as a new discovery. It comes to them almost as newly found words of the Master. A short time ago there was discovered in an old library a little treatise known as "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." Hidden for hundreds of years it came to us as a fresh message from these wonderful men. How pleasantly would come to us the discovery of some such book as that which would give us new words of the

Lord Jesus! Such words would be lovely to us, not because we are tired of the old ones, but because we never could hear too much from one so holy and so grand.

It is then a pleasant realization that the messages sent to the Churches of Asia are really the direct words of our Saviour taken down by St. John, in the "isle that is called Patmos," at his direction. The same Jesus who offered undying consolation in the words, "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted;" the same Jesus who spoke to a stormy sea and said, "Peace be still;" the same Jesus who stood by the grave of Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth," spoke, long, weary years afterwards, to St. John, in Patmos, these words:—

"Fear not; I am the first and the last: *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven

golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches."

And this gives hope, and it is hope that makes life a pleasant thing for the true Christian. As far as this present life is concerned, the future is dark enough. It must end in the grave. But the Christian's hope sweetens life for him, and that great hope is that some day he will see his Saviour again, that he will even hear His voice and clasp His hand. This is the true Advent thought.

And it was a thought that dwelt much in the minds of the early disciples of Jesus. Every day and hour of their lives they expected to see Jesus again, and what a hope was that! What an impression that wonderful life must have made upon those simple-minded men! If the reading of that little Book, the "New Testament," which, in its outward form, is but paper and printer's ink, can stir within men of loftiest mind the deepest feelings, so long after the events recorded took place, what must have been the impression which the living Jesus Himself made upon those who saw and heard Him in the flesh! And ringing in their ears were these words, "Occupy till I come!"