

The place of execution was a grassy knoll just beyond the city walls. The people crowded round to witness the martyrdom, but the soldier appointed to execute the prisoner, struck with the firmness displayed by Alban, declared himself unable to perform his appointed office, and, throwing down his sword, he too suffered martyrdom with his prisoner, on the same spot.

In happier days, under Constantine, a church was erected on the site, and this was followed, in the year A. D. 793, by the erection of a monastery, founded by King Offa, and later still—in the twelfth century—the noble abbey which crowns the hill, and which is now raised to cathedral dignity. This abbey is now in course of restoration, mainly owing to the munificence of a layman, who has devoted many thousands a year to this purpose.

Inside the cathedral one of the most interesting monuments is a shrine dedicated to the Saint, the materials of which were carefully hidden away by the monks in days when trouble overtook the Church. These fragments were discovered, during the restoration now proceeding, behind a false wall, and the shrine has been made as nearly as possible to agree with its former magnificence. Overlooking the shrine is the watching gallery, where, in olden days, the priests offered prayers for the repose of the soul of the Saint.

S. Alban's Day, it may be as well to remember, is June 17th.

The names of two other martyrs, of about the same period, have also been handed down to this generation. They are those of Aaron, and Julius, both, probably, like Alban, Romans, who are said to have shed

their blood rather than renounce their faith, at a place called Caerleon-upon-Usk in Monmouthshire. Many others doubtless followed their example.

Looking back over the long distance of time which separates us from this first recorded, or at least most important, Christian martyrdom one is struck with the reality of the religion of JESUS CHRIST. We live in days when many non-professing Christian writers openly acknowledge the SAVIOUR of mankind as a great *moral* teacher, the greatest it may be who ever lived. They admire His wise counsels, they commend His gentleness, they do not deny His ineffable goodness to mankind, but there they stop. They can get no higher. But where, let me ask, is the sane man or woman who is prepared to lay down life—and that, too the life of the martyr—for the *moral* worth alone of the greatest and best of God's earthly creatures? No. These men who lived sixteen centuries ago, whose lives were doubtless as precious to them as ours are to us, were animated with something far above admiration for the *moral* qualities displayed by their Master. They, like us, believed in His Divinity. They, like us, acknowledged no other God or Lord, and they—may I say also like we shall do?—died in the sure and certain hope of everlasting bliss rather than deny the Heavenly Father.

Thus the Church of CHRIST found early witnesses in our own land, and so long as Christianity is taught, the names of Alban, Aaron, and Julius will be honoured.

This persecution of the early Christians had a contrary effect to that which was no doubt intended. Instead of crushing out the new