

(Written for the *Church Magazine*).

Holy Days of the Church.

(CONCLUDED).

FESTIVAL OF ST THOMAS.

DECEMBER 21st

MORNING LESSON.—Proverbs XXIII. EVENING LESSON.—Proverbs XXIV.

FESTIVAL OF ST. STEPHEN.

DECEMBER 26.

MORNING LESSON.—Proverbs XXVIII. EVENING LESSON.—Eccles. IV.

“Will you tell me all about the life and death of St. Thomas?” asked Hugh Clifton on the evening of the 21st of December.

“Of the early life of St. Thomas, we know nothing, but it is supposed he was a fisherman, as he was one of the group to whom our Lord appeared, after His Resurrection by the sea of Tiberias. He was called Didymus, which means a twin: and St. John mentions him twice before the Crucifixion.

After the Ascension, St. Thomas preached the glad tidings of salvation in many countries in the East and came at last to India, where to this day are found some who still call themselves Christians of St. Thomas. Here he at length suffered martyrdom at the hand of the Brahmans, or heathen priests, who were extremely angry on finding how many converts he made to Christianity. They followed him one day to a quiet spot where he was accustomed to retire, and there while he was engaged in prayer they pierced him through with spears and lances, and so he died, not, as he had once said, he was willing to do, *with his Lord*, but *for his Lord*, and ever since his memory has been held in honour by the Church.”

“Will you tell me now something of St. Stephen whose Festival we keep this month?”

“As first martyr also of the Church, dying for that Faith which was brought into the world by the Incarnation of our Saviour, St. Stephen is fitly remembered first after the Nativity. He was not an Apostle, but one of the seven deacons chosen by the Apostles to minister in the Church, ‘a good man full of Faith, and of the Holy Ghost.’ I have not time to tell you more at present, but you may read for yourself the history of St. Stephen’s life and death in the second Lessons and in the Epistle for the day.”

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST.

DECEMBER 27.

MORNING LESSON.—Eccles. v., Revelation I. EVENING LESSONS.—Eccles. vi. Revelation XXII.

“Of the early life of St. John the Evangelist,” said Mrs. Clifton on the evening after Christmas Day, “his call, and the several instances in which with St. Peter and St. James, he was especially favoured by our Lord, we have already spoken; it is his later life, his death and character we are now going to consider. Can you give me some proofs of the affection which Jesus bore him?”

“Oh yes; St. John was one of the disciples who as you said before was most constantly with Him, at the Transfiguration, and at all the principal miracles that Jesus did; then he was the one who leant on Jesus’ bosom at the Last Supper, was with Him during His trial, and it was to St. John that Jesus gave the charge of His mother, the Virgin Mary.”

“Quite right. Full of that love which casteth out fear, as the hour of suffering drew near, St. John seems to have clung closer and closer to his dear Master. In the garden of Gethsemane, in the Judgment Hall of