

Heroes of the Christian Faith.

S. CHRYSOSTOM.

THE beautiful collect in our Prayer Book at the close of the Morning and Evening Prayers has made us familiar with the name of S. Chrysostom. Rightly we treasure that collect as one of the gems of our collection. It forms such a fitting conclusion to all the prayers that have gone before. In it we wish for a fulfilment of these, only so far as may be expedient. We leave to God the decision as to what is expedient.

But S. Chrysostom deserves to be known for other reasons than that his name is associated with this prayer. He has left behind him teaching that might be suitable for any age, and which bears special lessons for our own. Nor is it only his teaching we may study with profit. His life was in harmony with it. Like the pastor in Chaucer's song:—

To drawn folk to heaven with fairness
By good ensample was his business.

He practised what he preached. If he cried to the world of his day, 'This is the path; walk ye in it,' he took care to be the first to enter upon that path. He lived and died a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

John, surnamed Chrysostom, i.e. 'golden-mouthed,' on account of his surpassing eloquence, was born at Antioch in the year 347. He was of noble birth, his father being a distinguished officer in the armies of the Roman Empire. His mother's name was Anthusa. She also was of high rank, and upon her, on the death of his father, when he was still an infant, fell the responsibility of watching over and guiding his education.

Anthusa provided her son with the best instructors, and under her care the genius of John rapidly developed. Before he was twenty years of age he had conceived a desire to enter the monastic life, and although for a time the amusements that the world had to offer, and the practice of society in

the Forum, were all-attractive to him, he soon, under the influence of a youth named Basil, returned to the contemplation of the Holy Scriptures and the practices of a devout life. His early teacher, Libanius, declared on his death-bed that, had the Christians not stolen him, John would have been his fittest successor. And the Bishop of Antioch prophesied a future of greatness, when he observed his noble character and promising abilities.

John, however, had no worldly ambition. He desired to retire from the world's observation, and spend his life in meditative devotion. And it was only in deference to the wishes of his mother that he abandoned this idea, and lived quietly at home with her. Here his life was spent, not in self-indulgent ease, but in severe discipline, and he saw little of his friends of former years.

To this period of his life belongs an incident which illustrates the reluctance with which men were wont in those days to enter upon the Christian ministry, and which also reveals to us a flaw in the purity of S. Chrysostom's life.

The two friends, Basil and Chrysostom, had been selected on account of their piety and genius to fill certain bishoprics. If they refused their consent, it was understood that, in accordance with the custom of the times, violence would be imposed upon them. John heard of the honour that was to be thrust upon him with no small degree of alarm. But when Basil consulted him as to whether they should make their escape from the neighbourhood, he concealed his real sentiments. Himself he felt to be entirely unworthy of so high an office. But that Basil should decline to be consecrated he considered would be a serious loss to the Church. He therefore undertook to present himself with Basil for ordination. When, however, the time arrived he was nowhere to be found.