

asked a merchant as he walked away from church how he managed to find time for the daily service. "Without it I could not stand the strain and temptations of so large a business in these difficult times."—*Dr. Gott.*

ADVENT.

On Advent Sunday begins the Christian year. Advent means *coming*, and the fact brought before us is the coming of Jesus; His first coming in love more than eighteen hundred years ago; His second coming in power at a "day and hour when we think not."

For fear we should not think enough about these two comings, our Church has set apart a month in the year, when we shall think more about them than about anything else.

This month in the Christian year is called "Advent," and to those who are not self-willed, but who really wish to be taught, the fact that our Church has set apart such a solemn time is quite enough reason for keeping it, and trying to profit by it in every way they can.

The plan of the Church services is to trace the life of our Blessed Saviour from His coming down to earth to His going back to Heaven: the first half of the Christian year is taken up with this, the last half with learning the lessons which he came to teach, and the people who will know most about the life and death, and example of Jesus, are those who go to Church Sundays and week-days all the year round, not for one year only, but year after year from youth to old age, for the life of Jesus is such a great study that our own lives are not long enough to study it all.

Let us begin then on Advent Sunday to follow this good plan for ourselves, and let us try to make real to our minds the two comings of our Lord.

Advent prayers, hymns, and sermons all point chiefly to His second coming. There are two ways in which you can think of this; His coming in the clouds to judge the world, and His coming to yourself in your own death. Of both these comings you can truly say that you know not the day or the hour when they shall be.

Now it is very hard when we are well and active to make real to ourselves the thought of our own death. Indeed some people who are really trying so to live as to be ready for their own death, still cannot feel as if they were going to die. With their hearts full of love to God and man, their heads full of plans for doing good, and their hands full of useful work, they cannot quite make real to themselves the truth that their warm hearts, thoughtful heads, and busy hands will soon be laid cold and quiet in the grave, and all the schemes that they have begun will be left for others to finish when they are gone.

To such persons the thought of Christ's second coming takes the place of the thought of their own death: they are trying to do His work, and they are longing to see His face. Some of them, if they could have their choice to-day or to-morrow, this year or next, as to whether they would see their dearest earthly friend, or see their Saviour, would be in no doubt which to choose; the whole cry of their hearts would be "we would see Jesus!"

If this is their state they are ready to die, far more ready than those who wait for their own death as for something that is to make them fit for Heaven at last.

Oh! my friends do get rid of that too common idea! Death itself is not a means of grace: a holy death belongs to a holy life.

It is true that some who have led sinful lives, have died in an agony of sorrow for their sins, but though you hope God will have mercy on them through the Blood of Jesus, you cannot wish for such a death as theirs.

It is true also that some who have led careless easy lives die a careless and easy death, but why is this? Their conscience, which spoke to them so often in vain, now speaks to them no more. Surely you cannot wish for such a death as theirs.

Take this season of Advent then as a time of self-judgment. Go into the open Church, or into your own room, at some quiet time of day, there kneel down, close your eyes, and ask the Holy Spirit to make the Day of Judgment real and vivid

to you, if only for a very short time. Ask this in faith, and wait on your knees for the answer. It is a right prayer, and the light that you need is sure to come if you watch for it.

Then bring to that light your daily sins of thought, word, and deed: confess them fully, clearly, and simply to God, and vow by his Grace to leave them off.

Then, with that vow fresh upon you, begin that very day to change what you have found to be wrong in your life and conduct.

See how one step in the right path leads you on to the next. You could not mend your faults until you knew them; but now, if you are true in heart, honest in purpose, you cannot know them without trying very hard to mend them.

If each Advent that you live to see is spent in this way, the last great Advent when the Lord Jesus shall really come will be no time of fear and dread to you; living or dying you will have clung so close to Him that the day of His coming will be to you what it is to His Saints, that happy day which they have longed for and prayed for, when "they shall see His Face."

EARLY BLEST.

Only a little cradle!
But large enough to hold
A parent's priceless treasure;
Ay, dearer far than gold.

What is that priceless treasure?
A loved and lovely child,
Now nestling in the cradle,
And wrapt in slumber mild.

One rosy cheek is resting
Upon a dimpled arm;
One tiny hand is peeping
Above the covering warm.

The coral lips are parted,
And ever and anon
They curve into a gentle smile,
Lovely to look upon.

Over the blue-veined temples,
And waxen brow so fair,
There hang in waving clusters
Bright curls of golden hair.

And bending over the cradle
The happy parents smiled,
And softly prayed together,
"God bless and keep our child!"

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Only a little coffin!
But in that coffin lay
The hope of fond hearts blighted,
A small form cold as clay.

The curls hang damp and matted
Upon the marble brow;
The lips are pale and bloodless,
The smile's departed now.

The tiny hands are folded
Upon the quiet breast;
The eyes are closed for ever,
And baby is at rest.

The parents, proud and happy
But one short week ago,
Now stand beside the coffin,
Struck by the sudden blow.

And bending over that coffin,
Their griefs burst forth anew,
To think their babe so precious,
On earth no more they'll view.

Oh, parents, cease thy weeping!
Oh, sad ones, look above!
The God who took thy darling,
He is a God of love.

Oh, let not grief o'erwhelm thee
Thy child is early blest;
For he is safe for ever
Upon his Saviour's breast.

He shall never sin nor sorrow;
No more shall suffer pain;
And ye may meet in heaven,
Though not on earth again.

A LEGEND OF A MIGHTY KING.

A great King sat in his palace meditating. And he called unto him his counsellor, and said,—"Oh, counsellor, the halls of this palace are large and of exceeding splendour, but they are empty. We would hear the ring of footsteps, we would see in them faces which should outshine the crystal, and the ruby, and the diamond in the marvellous happiness dwelling here."

Then the counsellor bowed himself before the king, and said,—"Oh, great king, in thy realm there are many noble and rich; wilt thou that I summon them before thee, that thou mayst choose?"

But the king said, "Not so."
"Wilt thou, then, that I bring hither those of a fair countenance and pleasant speech?"

"Not so."
"Dread sovereign, scattered abroad in thy kingdom are many orphans, wilt thou that I send and bring them unto the palace?"

And the king said, "Let it be done."
And there came a day when the counsellor bowed himself again before the king, saying, "Dread lord, it is done."

And the king beheld, and lo, in the courts of the palace a mighty multitude of children, exceeding fair and upright, waiting his pleasure. But behind them was one little one, lame, and of a troubled aspect, whose head hung down heavily.

And the king saw and held his peace, while the first group stood before him, proud and erect.
"Oh children whose parents are not, whence come ye?"

"We come," answered the proud ones, "from doing our own pleasure on the earth. Give us quickly of the good things whereof thy servant spake, that we tarry not."

"What of the little one I see yonder, lame and downcast?"

"We know not. As we journeyed, one stumbled and fell, but we saw not whither she went; our heads were upright, what was it to us?"

Then the king said, "Take them away."
And another group passed before him.

"Whence come ye, oh children?"
"We come from tilling the land and labouring; from being wise and industrious on the earth; give us our reward."

"What of the little one who is lame?"
"How dost thou ask us? Behold we have walked uprightly. Could our eyes stop to look upon disgrace?"

But the king said, "Take them away."
"Children, whence are ye?"

"Oh king, we are poor and very humble; from doing our duty we come, from watchfulness and toil, care and trouble. Behold our feet are bruised, give us of this happiness."

"What of the little one who is lame?"
"Alas! look not upon her. In our own company she journeyed and fell. She knelt before us in the way, and would not be thrust aside, so we trampled upon her."

"Take them away."
Then one pale and trembling came and stood before the king, and he looked upon her earnestly.

"Daughter, what of the little one who is lame?"
"Ah, lord king, as I walked she lay at my feet, and when she besought me, I put forth my hand and helped her. Behold we are here."

"Oh counsellor where is the mighty multitude? Have all passed before me?" "All, great king!"

"Was there but this one, this little one, who remembered pity for the penitent?"
"Dread lord, but this one."

Then the king wept

But the faces of the two children were changed, and shone with an exceeding great beauty before the crystal, the ruby, and the diamond. And, behold, the lameness had departed, the muddy garments were renewed, and the hearts of the children danced for joy as they passed in to the palace of the king to dwell there.—L. S.

—The history of the world teaches no lesson with more impressive solemnity than this: that the only safeguard to a great intellect is a pure heart; that evil no sooner takes possession of the heart than folly commences the conquest of the mind.