

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

(Third Sunday in Advent.)

ADVENT, as is well known, is a time of preparation for Christ's coming; (the word "Advent" means *coming to*) and on the second and third Sundays in this season we are told of two great helps vouchsafed us for the work,—God's holy Book, and God's ministers. Both, if we but give heed to them, will yield us powerful aid in preparing to meet our God. Both, alas! are too much neglected. As the Bible too often lies on the shelf untouched from Sunday to Sunday, so is the voice of God's ambassador unheeded. People calling themselves Christians pay no respect to their clergyman, listen to him without attention, and neglect to pray for him, as today's Collect teaches us to do. Surely we may learn a lesson from a convert of old, who even laid down his life for the minister who had converted him to Christ's faith.

St. Alban was by birth a Briton, one of the original inhabitants of our island, before Saxon, Dane, or Norman had set foot on it. He lived more than 1500 years ago, at Verulam, which was then one of the richest and most populous cities in the country, situated in what we now call Hertfordshire. The Gospel had been preached in Briton long before his time; some say by St. Paul, some say by Joseph of Arimathea; or at least, we may suppose, by the companions of the Apostles. Still it drove out heathenism but slowly; and Alban was brought up as a heathen. He was instructed in all the learning of the day, travelled to Rome to complete his education, and then settled down as one of the principal citizens of his native town. He appears to have been a wealthy man, and was hospitable and kind, as well as upright.

Britain was at this time a colony of Rome, the great city which ruled over the kings of the earth. It was subject to the Roman emperor, and ruled by Roman laws; yet either from its remote situation, or the mild character of its governors, it had hitherto been free from persecution. The edicts against the Christians, which had spread slaughter and desolation through the rest of the empire, had not yet been put in force within our island. At last, however, the rage of the cruel emperor Dioclesian overpassed its shores, and the fearful cry, "Death to the Christians!" echoed through the towns and villages of Britain. The clergy, as usual, were the first sufferers; and one of them, named Amphibalus, flying for his life, asked shelter at Alban's door. Alban had too kind a heart to refuse it; and thus, strange to say, in the house of a pagan did Christ's persecuted servant find safety and rest.

Meanwhile, he who received the prophet was to receive the prophet's reward. Alban marked the blameless life of his guest, his meekness and humility, his earnestness in prayer, till his heart opened to the religion which bore such fruits, and he prayed to be instructed in it. And gladly did Amphibalus teach him, repaying a hundredfold the benefits he had received. The divine seed fell into good ground, and Alban became a Christian.

A few days later the government received information of Amphibalus's hiding-place, and sent a troop of soldiers to take him. Alban had just time to change his clothes with his guest, and send him away thus disguised, when the soldiers arrived at his door. Wrapping himself up completely in the cloak of Amphibalus, he immediately gave himself up to them. They bound him with cords, and carried him before the judge, who happened at that very time to be sacrificing at a heathen altar. The judge was rejoiced at the thought of having secured his victim, and ordered his face to be unmuffled. This was done, and he gazed at it in surprise. It was not the face which he expected to see. The citizen Alban, not Amphibalus the Christian priest, stood before him. When he recovered from his astonishment, and realized that he had

lost his intended prey, he broke out into a rage, and exclaimed to Alban, while dragging him to the altar of his idol, "As you have chosen to hide an impious man, and a blasphemer, his punishment shall fall on you, if you refuse to join in the worship of the gods." But Alban replied, with noble courage, "I can never again do so." The judge began questioning him about his family. "To what purpose do you inquire about them?" he answered. "If you would know my religion, I am a Christian." Being asked his name, he said, "My name is Alban, and I worship the true and living God, who created all things." "If you would enjoy the happiness of life," exclaimed the judge, "sacrifice instantly to the great gods." But Alban still refused, saying, "The sacrifices you offer, you offer to devils, who neither help their worshippers, nor hear their prayers. Those who sacrifice to devils, shall receive for a reward the everlasting pains of hell." Enraged beyond measure, the judge ordered his prisoner to be scourged. This was done most cruelly; but the sufferer's faith and patience were unshaken. He was therefore condemned to be beheaded outside the city walls. The inhabitants of Verulam, deeply interested in the fate of their fellow-citizen, and touched by his heroism, went out in a large body to witness the execution. The prisoner was led away after them under a strong guard, and the judge remained almost alone in the empty city. Crossing the little stream of the Coln, Alban was led to the place of execution. It was a grassy knoll, gay with many sorts of sweet flowers, and lit by the sun of a bright summer's day. A flowery platform it seemed, decked by nature for the sacrifice to be offered. Arriving there, the prisoner fell upon his knees, and prayed to Him he had so lately learned to know, yet loved so truly. The executioner, deeply moved, flung away his axe, and throwing himself at Alban's feet, confessed himself a Christian, and begged to die with him. There was astonishment and delay; then another executioner was found, and Alban was beheaded with a yet newer convert,—the soldier who had refused to shed his innocent blood. Many of the spectators, deeply moved, sought Christian teaching, and were converted. It is said, in Church history, that some of them were instructed and baptized by Amphibalus himself, and were afterwards cut to pieces by the heathen. And that servant of God, when his work was done, is supposed to have been also taken by them, and stoned to death.

St. Alban, the first martyr of the British Church, entered into the joy of his Lord June 22, A.D. 303. A noble church stands on the spot where he shed his blood for Christ's sake; and his native town is no longer called Verulam, but St. Alban's. Besides the lessons taught by martyr's history, there is surely a special one to be learnt from that of St. Alban. Surely it says to us, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls." We are not likely to be called to lay down our lives for God's ministers; let us at least be obedient to them, and learn with docility; and at this season let us pray for them, as other good Christians are doing. So through them may a blessing descend on us from the great Bishop and Shepherd of our souls!

A KIND expression of countenance can make the most homely pleasing. An honest heart and friendly act make the dullest lovable.

THE AWFULNESS OF LIFE.—Oft in my way have I stood still, though but a casual passenger, so much I felt the awfulness of life.—*Wordsworth.*

DON'T COUNT THE STEPS.—It is, perhaps, well for us that we do not count up in early life the number of steps, many of them weary ones, we shall have to take in treading the long road that reaches from the cradle to the grave.

ONLY A SMILE.

ONLY a smile that was given to me
On the crowded street one day!
But it pierced the gloom of my saddened heart
Like a sudden sunbeam's ray.
The shadow of a doubt hung over me,
And the burden of pain I bore,
And the voice of Hope I could not hear,
Though I listened o'er and o'er.

But there came a rift in the crowd about,
And a face that I knew passed by,
And the smile I caught was brighter to me
Than the blue of a summer sky.
For it gave me back the sunshine,
And scattered each sombre thought,
And my heart rejoiced in the kindling warmth
Which that kindly smile had wrought.

Only a smile from a friendly face
On the busy street that day!
Forgotten as soon as given, perhaps,
As the donor went her way.
But straight to my heart it went speeding
To gild the clouds that were there,
And I found that of sunshine and life's blue skies
I also might take my sharer.

TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.

SYDNEY SMITH was as wise as he was witty. He said one thing which is good for youth to have quoted in its behalf, and as a reply to the maxim they like not, namely, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." To hardship, say some people—to whom it is easiest to be hard—children should be early inured, so that in after life they may be better able to bear it, though if it should not come at all in after life their labour is not in vain. Sydney Smith, on the contrary, says:—"Those young people will turn out to be the best men who have been guarded most effectually in their childhood from every species of useless vexation; and experience in the greatest degree the blessings of a wise and rational indulgence."

FOOLED ONCE MORE.

Markdale Ont. Standard.

MR. EDITOR:—The most of people relish a good story, provided it be a truthful one. Tales of adventures, daring, heroism, dangers of the deep, battles, &c., all have their charms. Who amongst us could read the adventures of Robinson Crusoe half way through, and not have a desire to know the end of it. We confess being of this class. Now, the first thing we do when we receive our weekly newspaper is to hurriedly glance through it and pick out what we consider the most important items. These are generally distinguished by their headings; but you don't catch us trusting any longer to these glaring impositions. We could laugh at being fooled once or twice, but to get caught a third time is our reason for remonstrating. Two or three weeks since we got to reading what we thought was a very nice story in one of our Toronto weeklies, and towards the end it informed us about St. Jacobs Oil; we only laughed, and said humbug. The week following we noticed another heading, "How Mark Twain Entertained a Visitor." Well, thinking we might learn a little etiquette, in case Mark should take a fancy to send us an invitation, we read it, but by St. Patrick, if they didn't finish by making Mark introduce St. Jacobs Oil. Well, confound it, we exclaimed, but they have got another dose of that St. Jacobs Oil on us again, determined not to be caught so simple next time: but now,

sir, I admit the corn along comes our *Toronto Mail* on Thursday, down we sat, and almost the first thing we caught our eye was the adventures of Capt. Paul Boynton; it appeared quite interesting; it told how he had bumped against sharks, &c. At this point we began to feel a little incredulous, because, from our knowledge of these gentry, they would relish the captain alive or dead, all the same. However, determined to learn some more of his exploits, we read a little further, when—O, well, it don't matter what we said, you can't find it in any dictionaries, I'm dashed if the captain wasn't oiling himself all over with St. Jacobs Oil, it may be, the more easily to evade the sharks, for we made no further search, our curiosity was satisfied. Now Mr. Editor, in order to fool us again, it will require to be printed wrong end up. We have made up our mind to look out for anything and everything in the shape of St. or Saint attached to their name.

We are sorry for the readers of any journal to be thus "taken in," so to phrase it, but what can they expect when we editors are caught in the same storm without any protection. Whilst sympathizing with them, we can only admire the ability shown in any enterprise that can thus compel, as it were, the attention of people. When it is considered that, only a short time ago St. Jacobs Oil was scarcely known in Canada, and now has so commended itself to the favour of the people of the Dominion as to become the household remedy for rheumatism, neuralgia, pains, bruises, chilblains, &c., and all because of its surprising efficacy in these ailments, we think it will be regarded by everybody as a matter of congratulation that we possess, so easily attainable, such a reliable means for the cure of disease. Such is our view of the matter, although we are "fooled," on an average, about five times a week. If St. Jacob can stand it, we've made up our mind to "fight it out on that line, if it takes all winter."

A SMILE costs the giver nothing, yet it is beyond price to the erring and relenting, the sad and cheerless, the lost and forsaken. It disarms malice, subdues temper, and turns enmity to love, revenge to kindness, and paves the darkest paths with gems of sunlight. A smile on the brow betrays a kind heart, a pleasant friend, an affectionate brother, a dutiful son, and a happy husband. A smile resembles an angel of Paradise.

CAUSE AND EFFECT.—The main cause of nervousness is indigestion, and that is caused by weakness of the stomach. No one can have sound nerves and good health without using Hop Bitters to strengthen the stomach, purify the blood, and keep the liver and kidneys active, to carry off all the poisonous and waste matter of the system.—*Advancer.*

We hope some of our little readers will try and get all their friends to subscribe for the DOMINION CHURCHMAN.

UNSELFISH LOVE.—Wherever an unselfish love is the mainspring of men's actions, wherever happiness is placed, not on what we gain for ourselves, but on what we can impart to others; wherever we place our highest satisfaction in gratifying our fathers and our mothers, our sisters and brothers, our wives and children, our neighbours and friends, we are sure to attain all the happiness which the world can bestow.

A LADY'S WISH.—"Oh, how I do wish my skin was as clear and soft as yours," said a lady to her friend. "You can easily make it so," answered the friend. "How?" inquired the first lady. "By using Hop Bitters, that makes pure rich blood and blooming health. It did it for me, as you observe."—*Cairo Bulletin.*