

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR OCTOBER.

Oct. 1—18th Sunday after Trinity.
“ 8—19th Sunday after Trinity.
“ 15—20th Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of St. Luke's Day.*)
“ 18—St. LUKE. Evang.
“ 21—21st Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of S. S. Simon and Jude.*)
“ 29—22nd Sunday after Trinity. (*Notice of All Saints' Day.*)

NOTES ON THE EPISTLES.

By THE REV. H. W. LITTLE, RECTOR HOLY TRINITY, SUSSEX, N.B.

(Author of “*Arrows for the King's Archers*,” etc.)

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

“*Be strong in the Lord.*”—Eph. vi. 10.

I. To underestimate the power of an enemy is to court defeat. A wise general will always take care to learn the strength of those who oppose him, and to understand their system of strategy and methods of warfare. The strife of the Christian is not with “flesh and blood” that is against tangible and visible forces, or material things. The Epistle opens out to view a vast and powerful spiritual and invisible antagonism, organised, persistent, united to destroy the peace of God's children. The tendency of modern thought is to ignore the supernatural and to represent man's difficulties in attaining to perfection of life and conduct as chiefly human. The Apostle lifts the subject into a higher and more solemn plane of thought. Our warfare is against wicked spirits—principalities, powers, rulers, having order, and number and influence—“the rulers of this world,” not because they have been so set up of God,

but because the world submits to them and eagerly serves them,—“spiritual wickedness in high places,” i.e., the wicked spirits of the air. “The prince of the power of the air,” Eph. ii. 2. It is the opinion of all the doctors of the Church (says St. Jerome) that the air between heaven and earth is the abode of adverse spirits. The personality of the Evil One, who is the leader of the hosts of darkness, “the devil and his angels,” St. Matt. xii. 24, xxv. 41, must be insisted upon after the manner of the Apostles and our Lord. Satan is a person, not a principle of evil. The malice of the devil, Job i. 9, 1 Pet. v. 8; compared to a fowler, Ps. 91, 3; fowls, St. Matt. xiii. 4; sower of tares, St. Matt. xiii. 25-28; a wolf, St. John x. 12; a roaring lion, 1 St. Peter, v. 8; a serpent, Rev. xii. 9, 20, 2. Man alone in the face of such a foe is powerless. Therefore it is needful that he seek the strength of the Lord, and goes forth to the conflict armed with the power of the Almighty.

II. The foe is strong, but God is stronger. “They that are with us are more than they that are against us,” ii. Kings, vi. 16. But the Christian must “put on” the defence and panoply of God. He must take to himself the supernatural powers which grace bestows. He must hide himself beneath the shadow of Jehovah's hand. To “put on” means to put to use the gifts bestowed upon us in Baptism. “The whole armour”—the complete outfit of the Christian as provided for him by the Great Captain of his salvation. The soul has many faculties, through which any one of the fiery darts of the wily adversary may find entrance. “Fiery darts”—temptations and suggestions of evil. Each faculty must be guarded with the peculiar defence best suited to protect it. There must be method in religion as in all else if success is to be achieved in the end. A deliberate survey of the field, a counting of the cost, a thorough study of the tactics and forces of the enemy, and a carefully arranged and well-ordered defence. Christian Life is too often, alas! the very opposite of all this—a mere drifting on, with armour neglected, arms rusty, an unguarded walk, no steady perseverance in Christian habits, e.g., prayer, self-denial, the use of the Sacraments of the Church: hence so many scandals in Church life; so many falls from grace and virtue among Church members.

III. The faculties of the soul are: i. The *reason* or understanding to which the devil imparts doubts of the truth of religion, or some particular doctrine of it: pulling up the mind with self-conceit and pride of intellect. ii. The *memory*, through which he draws away the soul by remembrances of past sins, or by filling it with despair of the mercy of God by the recollection of past offences. iii. The *imagination*, which he fills with strange ideas, foul images, visions and schemes of happiness in ways where no happiness was ever found. iv. *Passions and affections*, whereby he excites to evil desire or undue aversion.

IV. The various faculties of the soul are to be guarded by: (a) The “guide of truth,” i.e., sincerity in all things; a sincere purpose to please God, “truth in the inward parts;” this is the bond which keeps every portion of the Christian's armour in its place. (b) “The breastplate of holiness”—heart holiness. Habits of purity and integrity blunt the edge of Satan's attacks and protect the heart—the seat of the spiritual life. (c) “The preparation of the Gospel of peace”—walking with active feet in all earnest endeavour to do whatever may set forth God's glory and man's salvation. (d) “The helmet of the hope of salvation,” 1 Thess., v. 8. Hope consists in a strong expectation of sharing those blessings which are seen by faith

as bright realities. Hope animates us in the conflict. Hope is the strength of life. Without it effort is impossible. Having the Christian Hope before him, man purifies himself. (e) “The shield of faith”—to cover all. Faith banishes doubt, crushes temptation, sustains the weary, banishes despair: He who has faith is no longer “afraid: for his heart standeth fast trusting in the Lord,” Ps. cxii. 7. “I had fainted,” says David, “unless I had believed.” (f) “The sword of the Spirit”—The Word of God revealed by the prophets and the Divine Son. With this sword Christ defeated the tempter, saying “It is written.” The use of Holy Scripture texts and passages. *Praying always*: Prayer keeps the armour bright and burnished and fit for use. By holy prayer and pious, constant meditation, we learn to use our spiritual weapons: our hands are taught to war, and our fingers to fight, and we shall so fight, not as those who vainly beat the air, but as men who shall have the satisfaction of bruising Satan under our feet shortly.—Rom. xvi., 20.

THE LAITY.

The Laity are “the people of the Christian Church as distinguished from the clergy. In several relations they have different names, the *Congregation* as gathered into the separate churches or parishes; the *Laity* as a single body; *Christians* in relation to their Faith. The Laity, as distinguished from the clergy, have had their rights and duties duly noted from the earliest notices of Church history. In the New Testament they are called the Brethren,—though this title was not theirs exclusively—the faithful and the saints. As the recipients of the grace offered by the Ambassadors of Christ, they are the governed in the Ecclesia or Church, but since the governed have rights and duties as well as the governors, the laity have had an influence, sometimes a controlling one, either for good or for evil, as saith the prophet, “and my people love to have it so.” The responsibility in either case lies not wholly, but largely, with the Laity. The recognition of the Laity as such in the Church goes as far back as the Epistles of Clement [96 A.D.], and from that time on more or less frequent notice of them and their position is made by the Church writers. Their presence is necessary to the proper celebration of all acts of worship and for due administration of all rites and sacraments, since Our Lord's rule holds universally, “where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them.” [St. Matt. xviii. 20]. So Baptism, while it may not be refused, because of the failure to have them, should yet be administered before witnesses. The Holy Communion is not a communion [i.e., fellowship] in the ordinary usage of the word without communicants beside the Celebrant. Marriage is before “a company.” The Morning and Evening Prayer is in the presence of the “dearly beloved brethren,” and so every office either pre-supposes or demands their presence. This is, then, the duty which the layman owes to the Church as the visible Body of Christ, that he should be punctual and strict in attendance on her rites, to receive her gifts and blessings. In her is the discharge of his covenant with God, and, therefore, it is a matter of obligation as well as reverence to God to attend upon all her services. Being themselves so important a part of all services, the Laity have a right to demand all the services the Church can give them. Morning and Evening Prayer cannot be refused to any sufficient number of the congregation demanding it; nor can the Holy Communion, if there be (no) cause. With regard to the diocese,