

The Church Guardian

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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

MAY 1st—St. Philip and St. James. A. & M.

" 5th—2nd Sunday after Easter.

" 12th—3rd Sunday after Easter.

" 19th—4th Sunday after Easter.

" 26th—5th Sunday after Easter.

[Notice of Rogation Days and of Ascension Day].

" 27th—
" 28th—
" 29th—

Rogation Days.

" 30th—Ascension Day. Pr. Pss. M. P. 15 21; Evg. 24, 47, 108. Athanasian Creed. In Communion Service, Pr. Prof. till June 6th, inclusive.

THE PULPIT AND THE PEW.

There is, doubtless, a great deal of poor preaching, but it is not to be denied that in nine cases out of ten if the preaching is bad the listening is worse. And so it is a matter of dispute between pulpit and pew whether the preachers are wholly responsible for so many dull sermons. That good listening does not make good preachers is admitted by the preachers themselves, but that it is a very powerful inspiration to the man who has the elements of a good preacher in him is obvious to every man that has heard a sermon. There is, then, great reasons why we should learn Christ's precept to take heed how we hear.

It may be that our Lord was not thinking of dull sermons, and that He meant no more than that we should be careful to learn the truth, and the whole truth, without any error, but it will not be foreign to the spirit of His teaching to say that we ought to make an effort to listen whenever the dullness of the sermon or (as is not unfrequently the case) our own dullness makes an effort necessary. And after all it is no very bad thing to say about a sermon that it may require an effort to listen to it. In occasional addresses the novelty, the curiosity, and the excitement of the hour are of themselves sufficient to keep the attention, but the occasion of a sermon has no such supports. There is certainly no novelty about it, for we have been church-goers as far back as we can

recollect; the subject the preacher chooses is never unduly exciting, and the preacher himself has been among us too long to be an object of curiosity. The business man, who has bustled about with super-human activity all the week, settles down in his comfortable pew with tired brain and exhausted energies, and is satisfied if he can catch between naps half the best thoughts of the preacher. The tired housewife, soothed by the hallowed quiet or the music of the sanctuary, finds it very hard to listen to truths that are so foreign to the thoughts which occupy her mind in the monotonous routine of her busy life. And the young people—they absolutely must have novelty, they can't live without it, and as there is no novelty in the preacher they seek it in the congregation, and so the gospel they carry back to their homes is about new bonnets and fine dresses and strange faces, and now and then a pretty bouquet which the preacher may throw out to catch their attention.

Now and then a celebrated preacher appears and the church is crowded, and the choir does its best and the congregation is all attention, and then people go home and say, if the preaching were better there would be no trouble about the listening. But the facts do not go to prove it. People will listen to almost any kind of a preacher the first time, and on the other hand there are people who would go to sleep under an Alexander or a Reichel after they had ceased to be objects of curiosity. The fact is the congregations of our ordinary preachers are, on the whole, about as attentive as the congregations of our great pulpit lights. And another fact which may be whispered in the ears of those who heard the "celebrated preacher" that created so much excitement is, that it was the large congregation and the fine music and the breathless attention that helped to make his sermon great—helps that have all along been denied the regular pastor whose sermons are complained of as dull. In his interesting "Colloquies on Preaching" Canon Twells makes one of his interlocutors say: "I am afraid that if I may judge by my own past experience in listening to sermons, university sermons among the number, young preachers are not the only men who failed to attract attention. Somehow one's thoughts, unless exceptionally interested at the outset, have a way of escaping from the preacher almost directly he has begun, and careering all round the world."

The Church needs to wake up to the fact that the pew has responsibilities as well as the pulpit. The popular idea is that with the preacher all is duty, and with the people all is privilege—the preacher must preach, the people may listen if they choose. But it is just as much a religious duty to listen carefully to the Gospel Sunday after Sunday as it is to preach it.

We have no right to listen to a sermon as we would to a secular address—free to hear what is agreeable and pretty and to turn from it altogether if we don't like it; we must make it a matter of conscience to hear every word. We are saved by the light we have only when we have all the light that is within reach—by doing the best we know how, provided we know all that we have opportunity to know.—*Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.*

NO. XII. OF EARL NELSON'S HOME REUNION NOTES IN CHURCH BELLS.

THE BREADTH OF THE CHURCH CATHOLIC.

SIR,—is no greater mistake than to look upon Reunion as a narrowing, cramping, and restricting process. The *Christian World*, writing of the daughter Church in the United States, points to 'the exclusiveness of that Communion.' And the *Methodist Recorder*, in a

long article on the desire for reunion, which it allows to be very far-reaching, dwells on the exclusiveness of the Episcopal Churches, and writes as if in a Reunited Christendom all special methods of work would be absorbed by a rigid uniformity. This fear is utterly groundless, as the history of the Catholic Church in the earliest ages, and in our own country up to the time of the Reformation, clearly shows. The narrowing, restrictive process, dates from the history of our divisions.

One glance at this wonderful article in the *Methodist Recorder* of last month shows the narrowness of sectarianism in every sentence. The so-called flirting with Rome, or with the Socialists, or with the Stage, is vigorously denounced. The purity of the writer's own exclusive form of Protestantism is extolled, and though he condescendingly allows the possible salvation of individual Greeks, Romans, and Ritualists, it would be sin for him and his to enter into corporate reunion with the great Christian Churches, which have held the common faith from the beginning until now.

Compare this sectarian narrowness with the breadth of the true Catholic spirit which we find in the Bible. The one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, and one settled form of Church Government in all its distinctive parts, united under the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers. But side by side with this is the unfettered outpouring of God the Holy Ghost, working through all the various and ever-varying ministrations of men and women in the unity of the One Catholic Church. (Rom. xii. I Cor. xii.; xiii.) The whole energy of the Apostle of the Gentiles seems to have been pretty equally divided between his zeal for the propagation of the Gospel and his endeavour to check in the bud the narrowness of the sectarian spirit, wherever it shows itself, either in the attempt of the Jewish converts to separate themselves from the Gentiles, or in the first beginning of schism in the Corinthian Church, where the 'I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ,' were all equally denounced as alien to the expansive power of the Gospel of love, by which all selfishness should be rooted out for ever.

This egotistical religion which sees only one side of a truth, which is unduly magnified according to the individual beliefs of certain leaders of thought from time to time, is of the very essence of division, and is the cause of that bigotry and persecution which is for a time in abeyance, mainly from the growth among us of a more truly Catholic spirit. Persecution from without we must always be subject to, but the disgrace of Christians persecuting one another, is something which all should endeavour to put an end to. The only security for the permanent deliverance from this evil is the restoration of the unity of Christendom, which, based on the broad foundation of the one faith and one form of Church government held from the beginning, will admit of great freedom of method and pious belief in non-essentials in the full and complete embodiment of the Christian law of love.

EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF THE UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASSES IN HOLY SCRIPTURE AND CHURCH HISTORY.

BY THE REV. T. TRIGNMOUTH SHORE M.A.

It may, perhaps, be well at the outset to explain that by the words "children of the upper and middle classes," I mean roughly those young persons whose social position places them somewhat outside the circle which is reached by our National Sunday-schools. In restricting my