

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR FEBRUARY.

FEB. 4—Quinquagesima. (*Notice of Ash Wednesday*).

" 7—ASH WEDNESDAY. (Pr. Pss. M. 6, 32, 38. L. 102, 130, 143. Communion service).

[The forty days in Lent are to be observed as Days of Fasting or abstinence. Ash Wednesday Coll. to be used daily].

" 11—1st SUNDAY IN LENT. (*Notice of Ember Days. Ember Coll. Daily.*

" 14—
" 16—
" 17—

EMBER DAYS.

" 18—2nd Sunday in Lent. (*Notice of St. Matthias*).

" 24—ST. MATTHIAS. Ap. & M. (*Athanasian Creed*).

" 25—3rd SUNDAY IN LENT.

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.*)

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

"*The day of Salvation.*"—II Cor. vi, 2.

I.—Our present life is "the day of salvation," the great opportunity in which the grace of God is freely offered to every son of Adam, through Jesus Christ. The Church, as one with Christ, unites with Him in declaring the sufficiency of His work completed for the reconciliation of man to God: "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," Ch. v. 21. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin, in order that we might be made (not righteous persons, that was not full enough, but) *Righteousness itself*: and there He stayed not yet,—not every Righteousness, but the *Righteousness of God Himself*. What further can be said? What can be conceived more comfortable?" Bp. Andrewes. This is the great Lenten message of the Church. Her call to her children at this season is to consider with all seriousness the atoning and restorative work of her great Head. And the Apostle adds a grave note of warning. He exhorts to a ready and full use of present opportunities to embrace and open the whole man, body, soul and spirit, to the influence of the Divine Love. The grace of God may be received "in vain." It may be resisted or neglected, or restricted in its power by indifference, unbelief, sin, neglect of means of spiritual help, and especially of the sacraments and ordinances and sacred ministrations of the Church. To examine himself as to his attitude towards those channels and springs of grace, so bountifully provided for him in "the body" is the primary duty of every baptised person at this season. If there is any failure it is not in the provision made for light and strength, or in the tender solicitude of our Heavenly Father, but in the recipient, who by coldness or misuse or nonuse of "the arms of

righteousness on the right hand and on the left," i.e., offensive and defensive weapons, with which every Christian soldier is furnished for attack as well as defence, against his spiritual enemies.

II.—The time is "accepted" of the Father, that is, the sacrifice of the Son Incarnate having been accepted by the Father on behalf of the race, and his prayers heard, we have a divine assurance (Is. xlix. 6, 8) that the Grace proffered by God to all in Christ will, if it be duly used, be available for their everlasting salvation. This present life is "the time" in which the mercy and condescension of God is to be met by faith and penitence and love on the part of the fallen children of Adam; "the day" in which Eternal Life and liberty from the thralldom of Satan is to be laid hold of and secured. The passage of time in the passing away, to too many of opportunities. Men are indifferent to this fact. The great business of the soul—reconciliation with God—is treated as an intrusion upon the attention and time and affections of mankind. With Christian people in too great a measure this is also true. Temporal things possess the heart and engross the life; the things eternal are relegated to "a more convenient season." The Church, by her Lenten season, seeks to arrest the attention of the world to the reality of the unseen, to the importance of the "hidden things," to the priceless value of "the one thing needful"—Peace with God and Life in Him—to call her children away from a fretful excitement about the "many things" of mere worldliness of thought and action. The fuss and folly and emptiness of much that engages even those who are pledged to the service of God.

III.—First, the ministry is to be exercised with every care, that no inconsistencies or weaknesses of the messenger of reconciliation may mar or weaken the effect of the message; in other words, that no stumbling block may be put in the way of God's "little ones" which may hinder them from receiving meekly the engrafted Word which is able to save their souls, St. James i, 21.

The laity are partakers of this responsibility for recommending true religion to those around them, so as to win them ever to, and keep them in the Truth and Love of God. The passage before us suggests a suitable manner of walk for all who "profess and call themselves Christians." 1. Personal purity is necessary—to be clothed with righteousness. Influence for good weakened and even destroyed by single acts of inconsistency. It is for all at this season, if they would find it for them an "accepted time" and a "day of salvation" to look to it that the smaller faults are forsaken, and yet "fret the garment" so sadly—the baptismal robe of purity and honour and charity. 2. Self-denying labour, and a regular observance of devout exercises—prayer, confession, Bible study, public worship, acts of charity and mercy. What do we more than others? St. Matt. v, 47, is a useful Lenten question. How does my life differ from that of the unbeliever or the mere worldling? 3. Patience under injuries and sufferings: to bear with meekness the distress, afflictions, necessities which comes upon him in the order of Providence, and to be long-suffering and full of kindness to his neighbours, to rejoice in hope, in the midst of earthly sorrow. To live in the flesh, but not according to the flesh, to dwell on earth as citizens of heaven; to obey the laws of this lower existence, and yet to soar above them in their own lives, are some of the marks of a true use of "the day of salvation."

IV.—The manifestations of the spiritual life. i. Purity. ii. Knowledge of the divine purpose in giving us life. iii. Long-suffering under injury or distress, knowing that our lives are in the hands of God, who doeth all things well.

iv. By love sincere and single. v. Truth in word and deed. vi. The power of God exhibited in the life, e.g., St. Paul and his companions, and the early teachers and professors of the Christian Faith. The patient, unearthly life of every one born of the Holy Ghost, who has not received the grace of God "in vain." The mention of the present "day" of salvation reminds us of the coming "night" when all opportunity for spiritual effort will be past for ever, the night in which no man can work, St. John ix, 4.

A GLANCE AT THE FEBRUARY COLLECTS.

(*From the American Church S.S. Magazine.*)

The festival we are called upon to celebrate on the 2nd of the month is well described in its title, i.e., "*The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, commonly called *The Purification of St. Mary the Virgin*." The historical character of the festival causes it to fall just forty days after Christmas, for that was the interval directed by the law, between the day of birth and the day when the mother presented herself for readmission to the congregation, and her infant son for an offering to the Lord. The circumstances of the twofold event are told us by St. Luke 2: 22, etc., and have just been studied by our Sunday-schools in connection with their lesson on the aged "Eye witness" Simeon, who at this time uttered the "Nunc Dimittis," so dear and sacred in the music of the Christian Church. The festival was instituted either by the Emperor Justin in 526, or by Justinian in 542, apparently on the occasion of earthquakes. It replaced a heathen festival of Ceres, which fell on the same day, and processions with lighted candles were continued as in the heathen festival, though with change of purpose. Hence the familiar name, "Candlemas Day."

The Collect appointed for this day is from the Sacramentary of Gregory, and consists of (1) "A commemoration of our Lord's presentation in the Temple in the substance of 'our flesh';" (2) "A prayer that through Him we may be presented unto God with pure and clean hearts." It is of course the cleanness of the Virgin's body, and thus her purification, which suggests the prayer for the "pure and clean heart." The first Sunday in the month, on the 4th, is that called *Quinquagesima*, or as further defined in our Prayer Book, "The next Sunday before Lent." When speaking in our last month's article of "Septuagesima" and "Sexagesima," we were compelled to say something of "Quinquagesima," and particularly of the meaning of its name (Fifty). We need now therefore only recall the fact of its being so named because fifty days from Easter. Its Collect is as beautiful and full of meaning as any in our Prayer Book; and if every one who utters it, or perhaps we should say, sincerely prays it during the present month, has his prayer granted, both the Church and the world will have progressed wonderfully towards that much desired era of "peace and all virtues." It was composed in 1549, and was entirely new, being based on the Epistle, which is St. Paul's remarkable chapter on "Charity." Yet Charity in the Greek means something more than it has come to mean in our present-day English; for it means Christian love in its very widest sense, including love to God as well as love to man, and thus the life which should be the index of such a love.

The Collect consists of (1) "A declaration of the worthlessness of all our doings in the absence of charity;" (2) "A prayer for that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues." The old Collect contained a reference to the practice of Confession as a preparation for Lent. Its "aspiration" ran as