

us a character that is worth studying. And in the second it reminds us of the great antiquity of our branch of the Church.

And firstly, as to the character of S. Alban. We judge a man's character according to the opportunities he has possessed, and the circumstances with which he has been surrounded. In dark ages we do not expect to meet with such lofty standards of living as in those flooded with light. We do not look for the perfection of the Sermon on the Mount in the lives of Samson, and Gideon, and Deborah, and Barak. And we should hardly have hoped for a noble, Christian life, as the outcome of the turbulent British times. And yet, we stumble across such, in the history of S. Alban. It is a history of the noblest self-surrender. It is the tale of a man giving his life for his friend. In his dying act, Alban followed closely the footsteps of his Divine Master.

The story is as follows. Alban was a Roman soldier, living at Verulam, near the town which since has received his name, and in which a glorious cathedral has been dedicated to his memory. During the persecution of Diocletian, towards the close of the third century, a Christian priest sought shelter at his house. Alban received him, and by-and-by, observing the earnestness with which his guest engaged in his devotions, he declared himself a Christian, and was instructed and baptised. The priest, being discovered and sent for, Alban hastily changed garments with him, and presented himself in his place, thus enabling the priest to escape. When recognised, he at once declared himself a Christian, and was ordered to instant execution. The soldier, who conducted him, was so struck with his manly bearing and unflinching firmness, that he threw away his sword, declaring that he would not carry out the sentence, and desiring that he might suffer too. So together they suffered martyrdom for the Faith of Christ. As they passed to execution, various miracles were said to have taken place. A river dried up to enable them to cross it; and a fountain burst forth when Alban desired water. And the executioner's eyes, it was afterwards reported, fell from his head, as he accom-

plished his revolting task. All these traditions, which have gathered round the sad event, serve to show the reverence a good man could inspire in his fellows, even in a dark and a dreary age. May his name still kindle in Christian breasts the true spirit of self-sacrifice.

But the name of S. Alban serves a second useful purpose. It reminds us of the antiquity of our Church. He is *our* S. Alban. We, and he, are of the same Divine society. Equally are we members of Christ's Spiritual Body. We regard him as an ancestor in Christ.

Some people suppose that the Church to which we belong, was selected out of a number of other religious bodies, and established as the National Church in the time of Charles II. They think that there have always been several forms of Christianity, from which the State picked out and endowed one.

Others imagine that a Roman Catholic Church was expelled from this country at the Reformation, and a new institution put in its place.

And among those, who know both of these to be false and foolish ideas, it is frequently supposed that the Christianity of England dates from the time of S. Augustine 596, A.D., and was first received by the Saxons at the hands of teachers from Rome.

To all these theories, the name of S. Alban should suggest an answer. Our Church is his Church, and amongst our own island martyrs we place his name first. Alban lived before Normans or Saxons set foot here, before parliaments were instituted, or kings of England reigned. He was a member of a native Church, which was already deeply rooted in the hearts of our British forefathers before this land was civilised, or a nation formed. He was only one, amongst many, who devoted their lives to the settling and strengthening of this Church. His devotion has not ceased to bear fruit. The Church he loved has continued to witness to Christ in this country from that day to this, and to her influence may largely be ascribed the framing of those laws and institutions of which we are so justly proud, and which