

7. The growth of the Church is aided when those who labour for the Gospel show courage in dying for it. v. 15.

CATECHISM QUESTION.

1. *Do you know what you are?*

I know that I am a creature of God, for he made me, both body and soul.

Thus said the Lord,—I have made the earth, and created man upon it.—Isaiah 14. 11, 12.

Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.—Job 10. 11.

The Lord formeth the spirit of man within him.—Zech. 12. 1.

ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

I WAS speaking last time of the pictures of wonderful adventures generally found in periodicals published for boys. No doubt such pictures and the stories that accompany them excite in the minds of many young people a desire after the marvellous and strange, and make the round of daily life look dull in comparison with such thrilling narratives. And even our Christian boys and girls are apt to weary of

"The daily round, the common task,"

and to think they might do great things if their lot were only cast in different scenes and more stirring circumstances. Where is there room for the exercise of faith, love, zeal, devotion, courage, in the quiet and almost unvarying routine of daily duty? What opportunity has that boy in the store or in the workshop, or that girl who has to sweep the rooms or mind the baby, of serving and glorifying God?

Our lesson to-day supplies an answer. We are ready to look upon those early days of the Church in Jerusalem as very stirring and very important ones. So they were. Among the multitudes in Judea (not to speak of the great world around) those few thousand followers of Jesus were but a handful. The work before them was great, sufficient to rouse all the energies of a noble spirit, and more than sufficient to daunt any whose trust was not in the divine power and presence of the risen Lord. They were wonderful days truly. But human life was as common and as needy a thing as ever, and there were ordinary duties to be fulfilled, and ordinary wants to be met, just as there are now. And the peace and love and unity of the early Church were first threatened by a question which concerned just these ordinary wants and duties.

Whether the Hellenistic or "Grecian" widows had really been less cared for than

the Hebrew widows we do not know. At any rate it was supposed that they had. It may be that the work of distribution to the needy had been done hurriedly and without due consideration—perhaps by some who began to grudge giving their time to these minor matters. Anyhow a jealousy arose, which broke out into open murmuring, and must have marred the testimony borne for Christ by the Church as a whole.

So the affair came under the notice of the apostles. Did they content themselves with condemnation of the sin, and exhortation to contentment and mutual forbearance? No, the thing must be remedied, and men chosen to do it. Did they then propose to put it into the charge of those who were the least gifted, as work that might be done by any one?

Look at the direction. The assembly were to choose seven men, not merely "of honest report," but "full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom." The work to be done was not that to which the apostles had been called. Theirs was the ministry of "the word." This was the ministry of "tables." But for a man to perform it rightly in the sight of God he must have the Spirit of God, like Joseph in Egypt, (Gen. 39. 2; 41. 38,) and like Israel's workers of old. Exod. 36. 1, 2. And he must not only have that blessed Spirit, hallowing his mind and sanctifying his conduct, but he must have wisdom by means of that Spirit, such wisdom as to guide him in every step of this daily recurring work, that it might be done fairly, lovingly, and without causing offence.

Of these seven, all of whom would be particularly acceptable (as we gather from their Greek names) to the Grecian members of the community, there are but two of whom anything further is told us. But their work generally seems to have been attended with blessing. They left the apostles free to preach the word without interruption; they removed the discontent which had begun to clog the spiritual life of the Church; life and growth, extension and consistency, (ver. 7,) were promoted by means of their ministry. Here was a work which, though it looked at first sight ordinary enough, was worth doing, and could not have been done but by men who had the Spirit.

But to Stephen there soon came yet larger opportunities. His "faith and power" went beyond the ordinary duties of his calling, and showed themselves in "signs and wonders." Next he had to defend the doctrine of Christ and speak boldly for his Lord against angry and cavilling opponents. And then he was called, like the apostles themselves, to the bar of the council, to answer a charge even more serious than the one