

The Church Guardian

—: EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR:—

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CALENDAR FOR MAY.

- MAY 1—St. Philip and St. James, A. & M.
“ 2—Rogation Day.
“ 3—ASCENSION DAY. Pr. Pss., M. 8, 15,
21. E. 24, 47, 108. Athanasian
Cr. Pro. Prof. in Com. Service
till 10th incl.
“ 6—Sunday after Ascension.
“ 13—WHITSUN-DAY. Pr. Pss. M. 48, 68;
E. 104, 145. Ath. Cr. Pr. Prof.
until May 19th incl. Notice of
Monday and Tuesday, and of
• Ember Days. Ember Col. daily.
“ 14—Monday in Whitsun-week.
“ 15 Tuesday “ “
“ 16 Ember Day.
“ 18— } Ember Days.
“ 19— }
“ 20—TRINITY SUNDAY: Athan. Cr. Pr. Prof.
in Com. Service.
“ 27—1st Sunday after Trinity.

NOTES ON THE EPISTLES.

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

Author of “Arrows for the King's Archers,”

TRINITY SUNDAY.

“I was in the Spirit.”—Rev. iv.

I.—Trinity Sunday is essentially “The Lord's Day.” This festival commemorates the completion of God's saving work and the perfect revelation to man of the Three Persons in one God, as the sole objects of Christian worship and adoration. The love of each Person had been commemorated in the separate festivals which show before God and man the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord, and the sending forth by the Father and the Son of the Divine Comforter on Whitsun Day. In this festival of Trinity all these solemn subjects of belief are gathered into one sublime act of worship, as the Church Militant looks upward through the “door” that is opened in heaven and bows in adoration with the Church Triumphant, saying “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Which was, and is, and is to come. . . . Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.”

II.—The Threefold “Holy, Holy, Holy” of the cherubic song supplies the central thought of the Epistle for the Day. The vision is a revelation of the mysterious being of God Himself. With the eye of Faith we behold Him in His enthroned Majesty, surrounded by images of brightness and grandeur. The emerald rainbow, the type of the covenant of mercy, is round about the throne, and the crystal sea of purity and peace is beneath. Material figures are used to assist the spiritual eye in its contemplation of the grandest and most awful mystery of the Faith. Human ideas are used in or-

der to help us to some apprehension of heavenly things so far as our limited faculties can grasp them. But we must ever bear in mind that these things of heaven are to be “spiritually discerned,” and that human words can only dimly and faintly set forth the realities of the supernatural world, a land which to us, in our present state of probation, must be still “very far off.” The nature of the Being of God is a mystery which we ought rather religiously to adore than curiously pry into. No similitude can be devised which shall in every respect be apt to illustrate the Divine attributes; no language avails worthily to set them forth. The cleansing of heart by penitence, the calm confidence of child like trust, the detachment which is implied by being “in the Spirit”—all these are helps to a right approach towards the due contemplation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Still it remains true that “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Natural religion could form no conjecture as to the Divine unity of the Three in One. The coming of Jesus Christ into the world opened up to man this truth which had been obscurely hinted at in the Old Testament Scriptures. The mystery of the Divine Being was then graciously unfolded, and the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost were revealed. God is One, a simple indivisible essence, yet in this unity there is a Trinity of Persons. “The fathers of the Church acknowledged the Father, Son and Holy Ghost to be the *Personae*, yet they held them to have no divided or separate existence, but to be intimately united and conjoined one to another, and to exist in each other, and, by an ineffable habitation, to pervade and permeate one another.”

III.—In the “four living creatures” before the Throne we have emblems of the natural life of creation in its various phases, rising by due gradation through the lion, the ox and the eagle, to Man, (Is. vi, 2; Ezek. i, 5-14.) The adoration of creation and all created things. The “four and twenty elders” symbolize the whole Church of God under the Old Dispensation and the New united. All created life utters ceaseless praise to the “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty,” and in the elders, prostrate before the Throne, we see the Church of the Redeemed acknowledging the Eternal God as the Creator of all by His Will, and the Lord of all by the right of His inalienable “glory and honour and power,” (Cl. vv. 2-13 of the *Te Deum*.) The whole passage thus emphasises in the loftiest and most expressive of human language one leading idea of Trinity Sunday: The contemplation of God, not in what He does, but in *what He is*.

IV.—i. The “door opened in heaven.” The revelation of spiritual things by the teaching of Jesus Christ. Grace perfects what nature fails to accomplish. “I will show thee.” ii. The spiritual mind only can see God. “Come up hither,” a rising above the environment of sense and material things, a ready obedience to the leading of the supernatural. “I was in the Spirit.” The dull, worldly, sensual heart fails to see the things of heaven. iii. Mercy and Love surround the awful majesty of God—the rainbow. iv. The highest service of all created things, the true end of man; the glory of the Divine majesty. v. The Holiness of Him Who created us. The title by which He is worshipped in Heaven. The most glorious of His attributes, “His Name is Holy,” Is. lvii, 15. There can be no concord between Holiness and Sin. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. To worship God is the greatest happiness of man as an intelligent creature, but that worship to be worthy involves an earnest desire for purity of thought and life. “Be ye holy as I am holy.” As the elders cast their crowns be-

fore the Throne, in token of unworthiness, so should we ever humble ourselves to the dust in that awful Presence, and pray that, being cleansed from all defilement of heart and life, we may be accounted worthy, through the covenant of grace, to take part in that glorious song which ceases not day nor night: “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth; Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.”

MUSICAL SERVICES.

(Church Bells.)

The revival of Church life during the past fifty years has been one of the most remarkable features of our recent national history. The protest against the aggressive claims of the Papacy, which was made in the Reformation, led to the discontinuance of many ceremonies and practices that had been in use in the Church from primitive times. The ascendancy of Puritanism during the Commonwealth acted in the same direction. The Restoration, accompanied as it was by the voluptuous profligacy of the Court, was of no avail in restoring the spiritual power and influence of the Church. During the reigns of the Georges, the predominance of Erastianism was both the cause and the effect of the indifferentism and unbelief that had eaten into the very heart of the religious life of the nation, from which it was to a great extent rescued by the Evangelical revival at the close of the eighteenth century.

The influence of Wesley and his system (until his followers so lamentably departed from all his hopes and injunctions by severing themselves from the communion of the Church in whose membership he lived and died) was both real and wide-spread. His insistence on the necessity of ‘conversion’ and ‘assurance,’ broke down the barriers of irreligion and worldliness which had taken such deep root in the country. Men began to realise the necessity for looking beyond the pleasures of this life, and for at least contemplating the possibilities of a future state.

As the growth of spirituality began to exercise an effect on the social as well as the religious character of the people, the desire for a deeper knowledge of all matters connected with the Church began to be manifested. The history of Christianity came to be studied with greater care; the progress and vicissitudes of the National Church were examined and weighed. Slowly but surely the conviction was forced upon men's minds that the natural and inevitable resistance of the intolerable pretensions of Romanism had resulted in the loss of many things which, though the common property of every branch of the Catholic Church, had been sacrificed because in ignorance they had been identified with the errors of Rome.

Thus we see how the way was prepared for the Catholic revival within the Church of England which was ushered in by what is known as the Oxford Movement. The controversies, the fierce storms of party feeling, are still too recent to enable a retrospect to be made with the absolute impartiality of the ideal historian.

Yet the reality and the solidity of the movement are shown by the almost universal change which has come over the character of the services of the Church in the last half-century. It would hardly be credited by the present generation that a clergyman could have been persecuted out of his benefice ‘for the offence of having preached the morning sermon in the surplice, read the Prayer for the Church Militant, and opened his church for divine service, not daily, but on all festivals;’ and it is difficult to realise that Charles Lowder could have been attacked by an infuriated mob for the offence of conducting an open-air procession in surplices.

We must bear in mind the fact that to a very considerable extent the introduction of a bright-