

COME SOON, SWEET LORD!

"Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"—Rev.
xxii. 20.

When the light paints the eastern skies,
With purple blush and crimson dyes,
My longing heart within me cries,
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

When the day hastens on apace,
And the bright sun runs fast his race,
Then I pray, with upturned face,
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

When the evening shadows fall,
And darkness gathers like a pall,
I sigh, responsive to the call,
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

When my cherished friends depart,
And I am left all sad at heart,
And cry, "I cannot from them part,"
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

When all around the wicked reign,
And the good seem to pray in vain,
My trembling heart cries out in pain,
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

My soul grows weary, weak, and faint,
While the sad years are slowly spent,
And saint holds vigil long with saint,
"Come soon, sweet Lord!"

—Rev. Edgar M. Levy, in *Parish Visitor*.

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

GREAT MEN OF THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

ROBERT NELSON.

It is the peculiar glory of England that so many of her greatest men have been true Christians and devoted members of the Church of England, and have given much of their talents and their time to church and religious work. This is as true of to-day as of any past age. At the present time England is mourning the death of a very great Lord Chancellor, the Earl of Selborne, whose life and character will be among the best inheritances of Englishmen. Through all his length of days this most eminent judge and statesman was a meek and lowly follower of Jesus Christ, "counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord," and was known far and wide as a most devoted member of the Church of England. Amid a life of great activity and many cares he found time to write a masterly work in defence of the Establishment, and for which his career as lawyer and judge was a splendid preparation. It is well known, too, that with all his eminence as a statesman Mr. Gladstone's greatest interest has always been in theology, and the book which first brought him into prominence was on the subject of Church and State. The Marquis of Salisbury and Mr. Balfour are enthusiastic churchmen, and give the work of the

Church in England their most careful thought and labor.

Robert Nelson, of whose life this article is briefly to treat, was another English gentleman whose chief interest was in religion, and whose best energies were given to the work of our church two hundred years ago. In one sense his is not a great name. It will hardly appear in the pages of any ordinary history of England, and, as a layman, he cannot figure very prominently in many church histories. But, if to be possessed of a beautiful Christian character, to have learning and practical wisdom, to enjoy the intimate friendship of the greatest churchmen of his day, clergy and laymen, to wield immense influence, and to throw all these, with zeal and foresight, into life-long labors for the Church of England, constitutes greatness, then Robert Nelson's ought to be a great name in the annals of the English Church. He was born in 1656, during the Commonwealth. His early days were spent at St. Paul's School, founded by the great Colet at the time of the Reformation, but the greater part of his education was received directly at the hands of a Mr. Bull, afterwards an eminent Bishop of St. David's, and the writer of a celebrated work on the Nicene faith. To Bishop Bull he owed much that was best in him. The bishop was a scholar of European reputation, and a man of marked personality. Nelson's last years were spent in writing the biography of his illustrious tutor—a real labor of love. About the year 1679 he went to London and became acquainted with the great Tillotson, then Dean of Canterbury, but afterwards Archbishop. A great intimacy sprang up between them, though in later years it was rather interrupted by the great difference in their views on all theological and ecclesiastical subjects. But love is stronger than doctrine—in Robert Nelson no church views ever circumscribed his love—and in his last illness the archbishop was nursed by Nelson with the tenderest love and died in his arms. In 1680 he went to Paris with the celebrated astronomer, Halley, and during the journey observed with his friend the comet that bears his name. While in Paris he had an offer of a position in the court of Charles II., but returned the answer that he should be glad "if England were so happy that the court might be a fit place for him to live in." It will be seen, therefore, how, as a young man, he looked to his ways and declined honors that could only be enjoyed at the expense of character. Though his prin-

ciples afterwards kept him from acknowledging William of Orange and bound him to regard the Stuarts as the lawful dynasty, they did not blind him to the fact that the court of Charles II. was grossly immoral.

It is not the intention to discuss the church views of Robert Nelson. The readers of *PARISH AND HOME* would, perhaps, strongly dissent from them. This article is to be a simple account of his really beautiful life, not a treatise on his churchmanship. He was a seventeenth century High Churchman—one of that group that numbered such men as Sancroft, Ken, Kettlewell, Beveridge, Bull, and Dodwell, so distinguished for true piety and saintly life. In politics, like most High Churchmen of the time, he was an advocate of the doctrine of passive obedience to the sovereign in all things. After the Revolution of 1688 he found it impossible to join in the state prayers of the church, regarding it a sin to pray for one who was not lawful king, and entered the Nonjuring communion—that is, the church formed by those bishops like Ken and Sancroft, who would not take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary, and had to resign their bishoprics in the Established Church. Later on, however, he saw his way to return with several other Jacobites to the communion of the national church. At this day all men will do honor to men of such principle, who had the courage of their convictions, and sacrificed so much to be true to conscience, however unenlightened it may seem.

It was an age of strong party feeling, and Nelson's views were very clear and distinct, but no political or religious opinions, and no strength of party animosities, ever narrowed his sympathies in practical matters, or made him mean-spirited or illiberal. He had no love for controversy, and rarely indulged in it, but when he did, as in 1688, in his work against transubstantiation, he demonstrated how Christian charity and generosity could take away all the bitterness of dispute. He took an active interest in the religious associations of young men which sprang up in London and other places about the year 1678, and a few years later gave the heartiest support, both to churchmen and dissenters in the formation of societies for the reformation of manners to check the growing immorality and profanity of the times. In 1699 the now venerable Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was founded, and Nelson, though a Nonjuror and a Jacobite, was enrolled as a member with the most distinguished