

ADVENT, AND ADVENT THOUGHTS.

AGAIN we are entering upon the sacred and blessed season of Advent. Advent has been kept as a holy season from very early ages. Some writers say that St. Peter ordered its observance, but this is uncertain. Still, we know that mention is made of its being kept very early in the Gallican Church. Advent was not originally observed as a consecutive fast, but the season began on the Sunday following the feast of St. Martin, November 11th, which was called the "Quadragesima of St. Martin," and the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays in each week till Christmas Day were kept as fast days. This was especially the case in Spain and in the Gallican Church. At Rome, Advent was not so strictly observed. The four Collects for the Sundays in Advent are very beautiful; those for the first and second Sundays were composed in 1549; the Collect for the third Sunday in 1661; and we must look far back to find the Collect for the fourth Sunday, for it is in the Sacramentary, or Collect-book, of Gelasius, 494.

Again we hear the words of warning, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

Words of warning these are, but at the same time of comfort, to those faithful soldiers of Christ who are striving to follow His steps, and "cheerfully to accomplish those things which He would have done," while labouring diligently in His vineyard; to such, wearied with the burden and heat of the day, the words—"the night is far spent, the day is at hand," are full of comfort. They proclaim that the day of toil is drawing to a close, and that soon the Master will return, and His faithful servants will be "safe home" with their Lord, all struggles against sin and the weaknesses of the flesh over.

No one can observe the course of public events without being convinced that the world is indeed hastening on to its end. With thankful hearts we are struck by the great increase of devotion and active zeal shewn by hundreds in the work of our Master's vineyard. To mention but one instance: Fifteen years ago it was comparatively rare that daily service and weekly Communion were to be met with in England; but now, *Deo Gratias*, the change is indeed great. It is rare now, even in the smallest town, not to hear the church bell calling those who value the privilege of daily prayer to come to God's house, and there unite in offering their daily prayers and thanksgivings to Him who has overwhelmed us with His goodness.

Let one word of warning be offered to those to whom this privilege of daily prayer is afforded, but who habitually neglect it. We speak not to those whose ordinary duties prevent their attendance at daily service, but to those who can spare the time, and, either from indolence, indifference, or mere thoughtlessness, never avail themselves of this great privilege. To these we would say, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." And what