

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

SEPTEMBER 17, Sunday.—Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.
 " 18, Monday.—St. Joseph of Cupertino.
 " 19, Tuesday.—St. Januarius.
 " 20, Wednesday.—St. Aidan.
 " 21, Thursday.—St. Matthew.
 " 22, Friday.—St. Thomas of Villanova.
 " 23, Saturday.—St. Thecla.

ST. MATTHEW, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST.

Walking one day on the banks of the Lake of Genesareth, Jesus beheld a man named Levi sitting at the custom house busy in the receipt of the public dues. Fixing his eyes upon him, and at the same time penetrating his soul with a secret inspiration, he said to him, 'Follow Me.' And at once Levi, rising from his desk and quitting all things, followed Jesus, and was numbered with the twelve Apostles.

This Levi, as he was then called, was no other than the Apostle St. Matthew, who, in the Gospel which he afterwards wrote, relates with great humility the history of his conversion. As the business of a publican, or public tax-gatherer, owing to the extortions commonly practised by these officials, was one which could hardly be followed without sin, he abandoned at once his previous profession, whence St. Gregory the Great remarks for our instruction, that while St. Peter and Andrew after their call to the apostleship frequently resumed their former innocent occupation, St. Matthew never returned to a way of life which involved the imminent danger of offending God.

In gratitude to his Divine Master for His gracious call, St. Matthew entertained Jesus and His disciples at a great banquet to which he invited his friends and former comrades. He desired, no doubt, to bring them under the influence of the Saviour of the world, and to promote as far as possible their conversion. The Pharisees murmured at the condescension of our Blessed Redeemer in sitting down to table with publicans and sinners. But Jesus answered them in these wise and gentle words, 'They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill. Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the just, but sinners.'

The earliest Fathers tell us that after our Lord's ascension, St. Matthew for several years preached in Judea and the neighbouring countries. A short time before the dispersion of the Apostles he wrote his gospel for the instruction of his Jewish converts. It was written in the modern Hebrew then in use among the Jews, and the writer continually appeals to the prophecies of the Old Testament to prove that Jesus Christ was the long expected Messiah sent by God to redeem the world. St. Matthew is considered by commentators on Holy Scripture to have been represented in the prophecy of Ezechiel by that one of the four living beasts which had the face of a man, inasmuch as he sets forth in his first chapter of his gospel the human generation of the Redeemer, establishing from public documents that he was descended from the royal race of David. The other three evangelists are considered to have been symbolised respectively under the likenesses of a lion, an ox and an eagle.

After reaping an abundant harvest of souls in Judea, St. Matthew set out to preach the gospel to the barbarous and uncivilised nations of the East. Persia and the southern and eastern parts of Asia were henceforth the scene of his labours. But he preached not only by his words but also by the powerful example of his holy and mortified life. He is described as remarkable for his continual devotion to heavenly contemplation and for his marvellous austerity. He ate no flesh meat, and subsisted principally on herbs, roots, seeds and berries.

His preaching of the Gospel, like that of the other Apostles, was accompanied by numerous miracles. Among these it is related that he raised to life Iphigenia, the daughter of an Eastern monarch, which miracle was followed by the conversion of her father and mother and the whole province to the faith of Christ. Upon the death of the King, his successor sought the princess in marriage, but met with a refusal, for she had vowed her virginity to God. Whereupon, in his blind rage, he ordered St. Matthew to be slain as he stood at the altar offering the Holy Sacrifice. His relics were afterwards brought to Salerno, in the south of Italy, where they are still preserved with veneration.

ST. AIDAN, BISHOP.

Aidan was a monk of the island of Hy, or Iona. From this great monastic establishment, founded by St. Columba, went forth many bishops and preachers into all the lands as far as the Tyne. At the invitation of Oswald, King of Northumbria, Aidan undertook the conversion of that country; and while he was still imperfect in the English tongue, the King himself would act as his interpreter. The saint travelled everywhere on foot, urging the faithful to frequent the sacraments, and the heathen to give alms and do good. Whatever he taught he practised; and though he rebuked the powerful with true priestly authority, he administered his reproofs in a spirit of such Christ-like meekness, humility, and sweetness, that none ever took offence. His converts were known for the fervour and austerity of their lives. St. Aidan died A.D. 631, and St. Cuthbert, then a shepherd boy in Lauderdale, saw his soul ascending to heaven, and was inspired to renounce the world. He was buried in his church in Holy Island,

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