

Friends at Court.

GLEANINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S CALENDAR.

(Written for the N.Z. TABLET.)

- December 9, Sunday.—Second in Advent.
 " 10, Monday.—Blessed Ralph Sherwine, Priest and Martyr.
 " 11, Tuesday.—St. Damasus, Pope.
 " 12, Wednesday.—St. Melchisedec, Pope and Martyr.
 " 13, Thursday.—St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr.
 " 14, Friday.—Blessed Delphina, Virgin.
 " 15, Saturday.—Venerable John Almond, Priest and Martyr.

VENERABLE JOHN ALMOND, PRIEST AND MARTYR.

THE Venerable John Almond was a native of Lancashire and was born at Allerton, in the neighborhood of Liverpool. He received his early education at a school in the village of Much Woolton, but at the age of eight went to live in Ireland, whence after some years he was sent to the English Seminary of Rheims. His later studies were made at Rome, where he spent seven years. At their completion he undertook a public defense of the whole course of theology in presence of an illustrious assembly of Roman prelates, and acquitted himself with great applause. It is related that the Venerable Cardinal Baroni, who was present on the occasion, was so charmed with his modesty and learning, that at the conclusion of the thesis he embraced him several times, and kissed the tonsure on that blessed head which was so soon to be decorated with the martyr's crown. Soon afterwards he was sent upon the English mission.

For 10 years Father Almond discharged with untiring zeal and in the midst of grievous persecution the duties of the sacred ministry. In the spring of A.D. 1612 he was apprehended for the second time and brought before the Protestant Bishop of London, who subjected him to a long examination. Upon this occasion he defended himself with great spirit and ability, refusing to take the oath of allegiance which was proposed to him, on the ground that it contained matter contrary to the Divine Law. At the same time he professed himself in all temporal matters a loyal and obedient subject of the King.

After the examination Father Almond was committed to Newgate, where he remained for several months awaiting his trial. During this time he had to suffer many severe hardships owing to the cruelty and avarice of the keeper. Such was the severity with which the captive priests were treated that many of them withdrew their parole and seven effected their escape. After this the remainder were treated with increased rigor and were cast down securely fettered into the dark, damp dungeon called 'Little Ease,' where they were fed on black barley bread and dirty water, being on one occasion left without any food for four and twenty hours. Not long after the escape of the prisoners, Father Almond was brought to trial on a charge of high treason, being accused of receiving Sacred Orders beyond the sea by the authority of the Roman Pontiff, and afterwards returning to England and remaining there contrary to the statute. On this occasion he displayed the same fearless demeanor and ready wit that he had previously shown before the Bishop, neither admitting nor denying his sacred character. He was, however, brought in guilty and condemned to death as a traitor.

Upon the day appointed for his execution the generous confessor was brought out of Newgate, and stepped with a smiling countenance on to the hurdle which was to convey him to Tyburn. Having been placed upon his back, he lay with his hands joined and turned up to heaven, employing himself as he passed along the streets in prayer and meditation. Upon his arrival at the place of execution it was with some difficulty that he mounted into the cart, for his legs were weak and stiff with the cold and hardships of his imprisonment. Having at length succeeded in doing so, he knelt down, blessed himself with the Sign of the Cross, and remained for a short time in silent prayer. Then rising and having obtained permission from the sheriff to address the people he explained to them the cause of his apprehension and of the sentence of death passed upon him, declaring at the same time his entire innocence of the least thought of treason and his readiness to lay down his life for his crucified Lord. Having finished his address, Father Almond distributed among the people the remainder of his money and the other contents of his pockets, with the exception of a golden angel, a coin worth about 11s. This he gave to the executioner, not, as he explained to him, out of any hope that he would spare him, for he was willing to be ripped up alive, but simply for the discharge of his office. Then, kneeling in his shirt with the halter about his neck, he waited till the hangman was ready, and with a smiling countenance implored all Catholics present to pray for him and with him, often repeating these words: 'O Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' along with the adorable Name of Jesus. While thus he prayed the cart was drawn away, and he was suffered to remain hanging for the space of three Our Fathers, the people meanwhile pulling him by the legs in order to hasten his death. The body of the holy martyr was then cut down and the usual butchery performed, while his happy soul took its flight to its heavenly abode. The Venerable John Almond suffered on Dec. 5, A.D. 1612, in the 45th year of his age and the 11th of his missionary labors.

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A RELIGIOUS SERVICE AT SEA.

ON the last Sunday in September a unique religious service occurred on board an Atlantic liner. The service was conducted by two Catholic priests for the benefit of a congregation mostly Protestant. Here is an account of the service culled from a Protestant journal, the *Outlook* :—

'It was entirely in English and began with the usual phrase, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen," at which, as at the close, all the Catholics and most of the Anglicans present crossed themselves. Then followed the Lord's Prayer, everyone joining. Then came the Catholic Ave Maria, or the Angelic Salutation taken from the first chapter of St. Luke, "Hail Mary, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus"—to which follows this petition: "Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen."

'Next came the Apostles' Creed in the exact language familiar to everyone present, and then the General Confession, not, alas! in the language of the Anglican prayer book, but as the Catholics have come to use it. Its English translation begins thus: 'I confess to Almighty God, to the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to Blessed John the Baptist, to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the Saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.' This was naturally followed by the exquisite prayer used by Catholics beginning: 'Almighty God, who, though dwelling in the highest heaven, yet vouchsafeth to regard the lowest creature upon earth.' The Epistle and Gospels were next read, and in the selections there was no variance of language from the King James version.

'The sermon followed—a noble discourse. Hymns had been selected to close the service, hymns dear, both in Latin and through many a translation, to Christians of whatever name—"O come all ye faithful," "Jesus, the very thought of Thee," and "Jerusalem the golden,"'

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