

CATERPILLARS IN CHURCH.

A STRANGE ECCLESIASTICAL TRIAL.



IN the darker ages of the past it was by no means uncommon on the Continent to arraign animals before the judges as criminals. Early in the fourteenth century records of such trials were kept, and as late as 1650 the French law books demonstrated the proper method of proceeding against such animals as rats, fleas, locusts, eels, and

leeches, and also pointed out the correct manner in which counsel were to be appointed to defend such accused. One of these old French laws was to the effect that if a vicious animal slew a person, and if it could be proven

that its owner knew of the propensity to attack people, and notwithstanding this knowledge had allowed it to wander at large, both he and the offending animal could be put to death. Many animals were tried under this statute, and put to death in various ways.

In 1584 a period of heavy rains brought forth an amazing number of caterpillars, which amounted almost to a plague. They were everywhere, the walls and windows of even sacred edifices were covered with the creeping larvæ. The Grand Vicar of Vallance, disgusted with this irreverence, formally cited all the offenders to appear before him in church, and a proctor was appointed to defend them. On the appointed day the cause was solemnly debated upon, and doubtless some of the caterpillars would be present within sight of the ceremony.

The vicar sentenced the caterpillars to leave the diocese, but the audacious insects did not obey the dictatorial official's mandate, the judgment of the court seeming not to affect them in the least. It was next discussed whether they ought to proceed to enforce the decision by means of malediction or by excommunication, viz., by cursings or by excluding them from the ordinances of the church. But the vicar consulted with two learned priests, and acting on their advice he altered his tactics, and only assailed the caterpillars with prayers, abjurations, and the sprinkling of holy water. After several months of this procedure, although at first the insects seemed to thrive upon the regime, they gradually died out, and these ceremonies got the credit of miraculously exterminating them.

HAPPINESS must be cultivated. It is like character. It is not a thing to be let safely alone for a moment, or it will run to weeds.

PRECOCIOUS CHILDREN.

CHRISTIAN HEINECKAR, born at Lubeck in 1721, spoke distinctly at the age of ten months, and when a year old, knew by heart the leading events recorded in the Pentateuch. In his second year he was familiar with the Old and New Testaments; in his third year he had a fair knowledge of geography and history; and in his fourth year he was an adept in religious and ecclesiastical knowledge.

The King of Denmark wishing to see this infant prodigy, he was taken to court and pronounced a living wonder. He fell ill and died before attaining his fifth year. To quote an old proverb very *à propos* in his case: "The sword had worn out the sheath."

Charles Wesley, a nephew of the founder of the Methodist sect, could play a tune upon the piano when two years old, and his brother Samuel composed an oratorio at the age of eight, to the surprise of the musical world. Both lived to attain great eminence as composers of sacred music; one was honoured by the special notice of King George III., and the other composed a grand mass for Pope Pius VI.

William Crotch, of Norwich, born 1776, played "God save the King" on an organ at the age of three, to the great astonishment of all who heard him. His remarkable precocity as a child did not develop in his manhood, for he never attained higher rank than a church organist, with the degree of Musical Doctor.

A CONSTANT SPIRIT.

"Renew a constant spirit within me."

O FOR a constant spirit, God beguiled,
Linked with the meekness of a little child;
A spirit without changing, calm and free,
Content to follow where I may not see.

A constant spirit, learning in God's school,
Patiently line by line, and rule by rule,
Letting God turn the page, the copy set,
Careful no task to shirk, no word forget.

Renew th's spirit, Lord, for 'tis Thy gift;
I am so weak, the stone of stumbling lift.
Give me a cleansèd heart, and dwell therein,
Thus only can I triumph over sin.

Sin—gilded, honeyed—came and laid me low,
"Angel of light" it seemed, and whispered so;
In one brief moment I had turned aside,
Forgetting to consult my Friend and Guide—

And thus I fell.—But, Saviour, Thou wert near,
A whispered warning filled my soul with fear,
A long, low cry, for I had missed the light,
Fallen and sin-stained, I was plunged in night.

But with Thee is forgiveness—Lord, I come,
With all my sin, a wanderer seeking home;
Give me Thy constant Spirit, lest I stray
And lose again the straight and narrow way.

Give me a constant spirit, let me be
Unmoveable, because linked on to Thee;
Mine eyes fixed ever on the Sinless One,
Thus "kept for Jesus" 'till life's journey's done.

Laura A. Barter Snow.