

How natural then for those in the Church which is the body of Christ to rejoice, to make high Festival at Easter! The poet says, "I do but sing because I must," as the bird trills these spring mornings, as the sap rises to meet the sun, as the grass blade shoots up, as the buds form and blossom into flower, so natural is it for the Church of Jesus to greet the Easter dawn with "Alleluia! He is risen." To us the centuries between the rending of the tomb and now, exist not. So vividly realized is the fact that not the Master only but our beloved dead are "risen indeed," that we sing because we must from grateful fulness of heart.

Those who rejoice not with us have upon their chilled souls the icy grip of a dead man's hand, the hand of one whose "blood was very snow-broth" when alive, the hand of the man who thought to do better than Jesus was stained with the blood of his fellow man; for Calvin thought to do better as a Church founder, than Jesus and the Apostles, and burnt Servetus to show us how fit he was for the task. His clammy grip chills and straitens that Church which above all others casts contempt on all sacred memorial seasons. Other sects are held bound to their founder's corpse, and show no slight signs of sharing his corruption, for them there is no Easter; *dead sects have no resurrection morn.* Men have narrowed their souls by running them like moulten lead into the hard bullet-mould of a sect. Cribb'd, cabin'd, and confined, their spirits spread not in the sun and air of God's garden, but grow stunted and mean, where no richness of earth is. They share his prejudices and unity who founded their society. They share too in his guilt who blasphemously prefer a man-made to that Catholic and Apostolic Church whose Easter songs are ringing in joyous peals "ALLELUIA, HE IS RISEN!"

"THE CHURCH."

AS SEEN BY A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER.

The following is the substance of a lecture delivered by Thomas K. Beecher, Congregational minister, of Elmira, New York:

"Let another man praise thee, not thine own mouth; a stranger and not thine own lips." Prov. XXVII. 2.

I invite you this evening, to view the beauty, the uses and the truth that belong to those Christians among us who are popularly called Episcopalians. The Episcopal Church in America is in fact a continuation of the Church of England. As gardeners lay down a branch of a vine and stake it fast and cover it till it takes root, and then cut it off and leave it to grow by its own roots, so the Episcopal Church in this land was a branch of the Church of England, which was laid down and rooted, and by our revolutionary war cut off to grow ever since with roots of its own. The Church in America differs from the Church of England in those matters, chiefly, that must needs have been changed because these States ceased to be colonies and became a nation with differing political constitution. Instead of king, the churchman in America says president; for parliament, congress. He needs a prayer quite new for his legislature and governor, for in England there were none such. But he drops all mention of the gunpowder plot, the martyrdom of Charles I., the accession and happy reign of our sovereign lady, Queen Victoria, and all other strictly English events.

Of all Protestant churches, the Episcopal best deserves the name Reformed. She preserves so many of the usages and excellencies of the Roman Church, and so few of her errors, that it is quite easy to perceive that she is a reformed church. All other Protestant churches seem revolutionary rather than reformed. The Reformation in England was more than two hundred years long. There were no volcanic convulsions; no one brilliant fourth of July day in which the great reform was proclaimed. Nor was the Reformation purely and disinterestedly religious. When the Pope (Urban V., 1365), demanded large sums of money in payment of tribute long in arrear, Parliament gave willing ear to the reformer Wickliffe,

who denied the authority of Rome, and so excused the nation from paying its debt. Afterwards, Esso, this same great man finished a translation of the Latin Bible into English. He wrote tracts for the people. He revived preaching to the people. His disciples went diligently up and down the land, teaching and preaching the truth and the authority of the Holy Scriptures. Thus, one hundred and fifty years before Luther was heard of as a revolutionary reformer (1518), the heaven of Bible reading and private thinking was at work among the English people. The followers of Wickliffe, known in history as Lollards, have furnished thousands of names to the bishops' list of heretics, elsewhere known as the noble army of martyrs.

During the reign of Henry VIII. (1534), the Church in England was declared independent of Rome. This was perhaps the crisis of the English reformation. King Henry was a man not unlike famous King David, in his love of women, his tempestuous piety and intermittent conscientiousness. He was a many-sided, large patterned man; a riddle to all small eyed writers of history. This curious king, having married his brother's widow, by special permission of the Church, by and by applied to that same Church to declare the marriage unlawful; and when the Bishop of Rome would not grant this required divorce, Henry, the headstrong and hearty, declared it himself, married again, laughed at his own excommunication, caused himself to be proclaimed supreme head of the Church of England, and to prove that in all these steps he was quite right, he cut off any man's head who should dispute or deny the same. *e.g.* Sir Thomas More (1534).

Thus, then, we come to a Church independent of Rome, but not yet reformed. The Bible was in many churches; yet men, not a few, were slain for reading it and talking of it. Among these, Wm. Tyndale deserves our mention; for he translated the New Testament into felicitous English, and published much wise doctrine, in consequence of which he was duly strangled and burnt. The king multiplied Bibles, but cut off Bible readers. After Henry and his stormy ways, came pious and gentle Edward VI. to the throne, and at once the flower of reform began to blossom, and the Church to show the features that she wears to-day. The English Bible was read by lessons at Morning and Evening Service as now. The liturgy was translated and said in English.

both the Bread and Wine were given to the common people at the Sacrament. And other reforms and purifying were set afoot.

Edward's reign was a short one (1547-53); long enough to introduce these changes, yet short enough to keep the Protestants from getting too much headway. After him came the pious but gloomy and unhappy queen Mary, who strove to bring the realm of England back to Rome. She caused persuasive fires to be kindled for the good of dissenting souls. She did what she could; but she could not undo the Reformation. Parliament and the people were too much for her. But her opposition kept the reformers from running into extravagance and cruelty. After Mary came Elizabeth, who caused Roman Catholics at one extreme and puritans at the other to feel her scorn, and suffer fines, imprisonment and death. Then came James I. of England, by whose order our present Bible was prepared and printed and authorized. And thus from reign to reign the Church of England came down acquiring little by little her present shape, and laying off the corruption and unreason of the Roman Church, as then existing and administered in that rude age. The Prayer Book may be called substantially complete as we now have it, in the seventeenth century (1661). Thus this reformed Church of England filled up nearly three hundred years in her work of purifying and simplifying. And of all Protestant churches, therefore, she best deserves the name Reformed.

In this country, the first parish of this Church was probably that in Jamestown, Va., 1606-8. Down to the revolutionary war, the Church in this land was under the care of the bishop of London. Shortly after the revolution an application was made to Parliament to allow an American bishop to be consecrated. But the Puritans and Presbyterians opposed the proposition, and so Mr. Seabury, the candidate, had to take consecration at the hands of certain Scotch bishops. But at last, in 1787, Parliament allowed the Archbishop of Canterbury to consecrate three bishops for New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia respectively. Since then the holy unction has not been allowed to fail. With pious care it has been propagated. And the Episcopal Church in these United States stands to-day as truly and regularly in the line of apostolic succession, as the Church of England herself.

After this mere outline of her history, it remains that I note some of her excellent uses and beauties. 1st. The Episcopal Church offers for our use the most venerable liturgy in the English tongue. The devotional treasures of the Roman Catholic Church are embalmed and buried in Latin. But in English there are no lessons, gospels, psalms, collects, confessions,

thanksgivings, prayers—in one word, no religious form-book that can stand a moment in comparison with the Prayer Book of the Episcopal Church in the two-fold quality of richness and age. The proper name, because truly descriptive, for this Church, would be Church of the Prayer Book. As is the way with all other churches, so here; the Church champions and leaders have many wise things to say about the Church and her prerogative. But the pious multitude that frequent her courts are drawn thither mostly by love of the prayers and praises, the litanies and lessons of the Prayer Book. And, brethren of every name, I entreat you that you rarely hear in any church a prayer spoken in English, that is not indebted to the Prayer Book for some of its choicest periods. And further, I doubt whether life has in store for any of you an uplift so high, or downfall so deep, but that you can find company for your soul and fitting words for your lips among the treasures of this Book of Common Prayer.

*In addition to our traditional use, in the time of our prosperity, in the hour of death and in the day of Judgment: Good Lord deliver us.*

As a consequence of the Prayer Book and its use, I note: 2nd. The Episcopal Church preserves a very high grade of dignity, decency, propriety and permanence in all her public offices. In nearly every newspaper you may read some funny story based upon the ignorance or eccentricity or blasphemous familiarity of some extemporising prayer maker. All of you here present have been at some time shocked or bored by public devotional performances. Nothing of this sort ever occurs in the Episcopal Church. All things are done and spoken decently and in order. And so, too, of permanence and its accumulating worth of holy association—no transient observer can adequately value this treasure of a birth-right churchman. To be using to-day the self-same words that have through the centuries declared the faith or made known the prayer of that mighty multitude, who, being now delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity. To be baptized in early infancy, and never to know a time when we were not recognized and welcomed among the millions who have entered by the same door. To be confirmed in due time, in a faith that has sustained a noble army of confessors, approving its worth through persecutions and prosperities, a strength to the tried, and a chastening to the worldly-minded. To be married by an authority before which kings and peasants bow alike, asking benediction upon the covenant that, without respect of persons, binds by the same words of duty, the highest and the lowest. To bring our new-born children as we were brought, to begin where we began, and to grow up to fill our places. To die in the faith, and almost hear the gospel words soon to be spoken over one's own grave, as over the thousand times ten thousand of them who have slept in Jesus. In short, to be a devout and consistent churchman, brings a man through aisles fragrant with holy association, and accompanied by a long procession of the good, chanting as they march a unison of piety and hope, until they come to the holy place where shining saints sing the new song of the redeemed—and they sing with them.

Another excellence I note: 3rd. The Episcopal Church furnishes (to all who need such comfort) the assurance of an organic and unbroken unity and succession, from Jesus Christ through the Apostles, by a line of authentic bishops down to bishop Huntington of this diocese. King Henry VIII and queen Elizabeth, with their proclamations and parliaments, are so conspicuous and fill so much space in the merely political history of the English Church, that many able writers deny that the river of apostolic succession so dammed by them, could ever get around the dam and flow along again pure and uncontaminated. I cannot decide this question absolutely. What I say is this: The apostolic succession in the Episcopal Church can be traced back so many hundred years into the dim past, that it is no shame to any man to say, "I believe it to extend back to Peter, Paul and John;" and he who verily believes that the ordaining or confirming hand of the bishop of this diocese is electric with the spiritual life that proceeds from Jesus of Galilee, will find it a hand of virtue and worth. He who doubts it will find it a hand of form and ceremony. And so without stopping to decide the question whether our bishop is really a successor of Paul or John, I say that the Episcopal Church affords so much evidence that she has in her episcopate the true succession, that it is no shame to any common man to believe her. And if he believes in his bishop he will get from him all the benefit that can come from bishops. Brethren, many needy souls are not able to lay hold upon God one by one. They cannot appropriate a gospel promise to themselves. Like Job of old, they say: *If I had called and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.* viii. 16. Such extreme and exemplary humility asks for and needs a Church ark, and the humble place and privilege of a private passenger. The ark of God that shall outride the deluge! The Church of Christ, in which is found