

No one wishes to belittle the Church of Rome or to ignore our own debt to her. What we object to is her usurpation of an authority which does not rightly belong to her, and her claim that, because some of our forefathers, in a dark age, ignorantly admitted those usurpations, we, with our eyes open should do the same.

(To be continued.)

THE VISITATION OF THE SICK.

(From the Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette.)

One of the most important questions which a clergyman having cure of souls is called upon to decide is, ought we communicate to the dying a knowledge of their state? At first sight it would seem as if there could be no doubt about the course to be adopted in such cases, but it is one thing to see what one ought to do and another thing to do it. As a matter of fact we know that too often the dying are kept ignorant of their danger, and that from many causes. Sometimes the person whose duty it is to convey the knowledge shrinks from doing so lest he should inflict pain. Sometimes from a lower motive still—lest he should endure the pain of inflicting and witnessing suffering. Sometimes the duty is not discharged lest the slight remaining hope of recovery should be destroyed. Sometimes shyness, diffidence, sensitiveness, call it what you will, is the preventing cause. Yet, assuredly, it is an awful thing to allow a soul to drift out into eternity unwarned of the near approach of such a momentous change; it is an awful thing to whisper delusive hopes of health and renewed life when a few days or hours, as the case may be, must end the conflict; it is an awful thing to cry "peace, peace," where there may be storm and tempest and blackness and despair; it is an awful thing to stand by and allow the "wise virgin" to go out into the darkness to meet the bridal train without warning her to trim her lamp; how fearful is it to allow one who has made no preparation which cannot stand the scrutiny of God to pass away without warning, without, perhaps, a suspicion that the Judge is at the door. Who would willingly take a leap in the dark and alight in eternity?

If we studied the Prayer Book more and drank of its wise and Holy Spirit we should learn that its compilers did not contemplate such a shrinking from duty on the part of the clergyman. In the "Service for the Visitation of the Sick" there is a prayer for a sick person when there appeareth small hope of recovery. Here the language put by the Church into the mouth of her minister is unmistakable while at the same time so cautiously worded as not to close up completely all avenue of hope.

"We know, O Lord, that there is no word impossible with Thee, and that if Thou wilt Thou canst even yet raise him up and grant him a longer continuance amongst us. Yet forasmuch as in all appearance the time of his dissolution draweth near, so fit and prepare him, we beseech Thee, against the hour of death," &c.

There is also a Commendatory Prayer for a sick person at the point of departure. Thus our Church evidently takes it for granted that it is the duty of the clergy to acquaint the dying with their real condition. But we plead for more than this. We say you should not leave the duty exclusively to the clergy. The physician has a solemn responsibility on him in this matter, as well as the minister of religion. The pious friend should not be deterred by mere secondary consideration from the discharge of a positive duty. Is the dying one a true believer? He may have many things to say or do for Christ in the few hours which remain. He may have some witness to bear or his Master. He may have even some family

matters to settle. He has, it is true, lived for God, but He said—"Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." The best men have much to deplore, the strongest wing has need to plume itself for such a flight, the most unquailing faith has need to look well to its armour before descending into the dark shadows of the valley of death. But if the dying one be a person whose life was given to the world and Satan, how necessary to warn him of his desperate state! True, we encourage not death-bed repentances. What then? The prodigal returned when he had wasted all, and his father received him with rapturous joy. The thief had but a few moments to live, yet they sufficed for justification and sanctification. God is rich in mercy. Do your duty and leave the issue with Him. Do not act with ill-considered rashness, but wisely, cautiously, and above all, lovingly.

If your warning should be the means, under God, of saving a soul, how glorious your gain! If not, at least you will be free in God's sight from your brother's blood. Better you should risk inflicting on your friend, or patient, or parishioner, as the case may be, a little temporary pain, than that he should die in his sins, and his blood be required at your hands.

THE CHURCH SERVICE.

(By the Rev. Edward F. Berkley, D. D., in the Living Church.)

It cannot be supposed that the strictures I propose to offer on the work of the chancel are intended to apply to all clergymen of the Church. Far from it. There are many who understand the nature and the purpose of the Prayer Book, and who use it with grace and dignity; while there are others who seem to be indifferent to both.

I have passed my 81st year, and am verging on the 56th year of my ministry, and am in no mood to write in censure, but only with the hope that attention being called in this way, by an old man, to the proper use of the Prayer Book, some may be inclined to accept and profit by his statements.

I relinquished parochial work eleven years ago, having been in active duty, in two cities, for forty-five years. Since my retirement I have had opportunities to see something more of the Church and her ministers in various parts of the country, which my duties denied me before, and I propose to offer some of the results of my observations in two or three letters to the *Living Church*.

There is no question about the excellence of the Prayer Book, and the public and private services it contains. They are all of reverential and devotional character, and ought always to be offered in consistence with their excellence. There is nothing so small in any of the Offices that is not of importance to be observed by the minister, whether it be in the chancel, in the sick room, or the Baptism of a dying child. His manner and movements are closely scrutinized, and anything that is worth doing at all, is worth doing well. I have no doubt but that clergymen in England who had only his sexton for an audience, addressed "Dearly Beloved Roger," with as much impressiveness as though he had a church full of worshippers.

We occasionally see in the Church papers a complaint from some tired layman, wondering why the service is so hastily and so irreverently offered. It is a just complaint, for many ministers enter upon and conduct it as though they were only mindful of getting to the benediction, utterly ignoring the devotional character of the Confession, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the soul-uplifting prayers. By his hasty utterance he cheats the people out of the pos-

sibility of rendering these parts with penitence and propriety.

At the close of the Exhortation, and while the minister is uttering the last word, "saying," he falls upon his knees, and begins the Confession in the midst of the commotion caused by the kneeling of the people, and has said two or three sentences before they are ready, with a composed mind, to race with him in that most solemn act of devotion.

It is presumed that the people have come together to worship God, and all sense of a true worship is crushed out of the soul, when they find it impossible, with any degree of reverence, to keep up with the minister, and take only a gasping breath anywhere between the sentences. And indeed in all parts of the service where the people join him, he ought to be deliberate in his utterance. He would not pitch himself into the presence of an earthly ruler to ask his clemency in behalf of a condemned culprit; how much less when that ruler is the King of kings and Lord of lords, and he is supposed to be pleading for souls that are under condemnation and ready to die. Unmindful of the time, the place, and the urgent needs of the soul, he heedlessly rushes in "where angels fear to tread."

Then, the beautiful and inspiring Psalter is mangled in the same way, overlooking the many impressive sentences, which, if read in a deliberate and emphatic manner, would enable the people to carry home with them some golden truth. But many who try to read alternate verses with the minister in a reverential way hurrying over the last three or four words when he is running on with the next verso. The minister's haste necessarily begets haste in the people, and where this condition prevails, the force, impressiveness, and grandeur of its utterances are lost.

This unbecoming haste is seen further on when he gets to the Creed, and the succeeding prayers. He says: "The Lord be with you," and before the words, "With the spirit" are fully answered by the people, the minister is hurrying on with the prayers in a most inconsiderate and un-devotional style.

And when he comes to the grandest of all human prayers—the Litany—there is often shown a coldness and indifference which ill becomes a minister pleading for mercy and pardon for himself and for his people. There is no form of supplication so calculated to arouse true devotional sensation of the soul as some of the utterances in that glowing prayer.

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One way out of this hastiness, and there is no way that can excuse it, would be to lengthen the service five or ten minutes. What are they to people, most of whom go to church only once a week, and for the rest, they would not worry. "I was glad when they said unto me we will go into the House of Lord," People who have come together with feeling would be glad to linger a while longer in the sacred place, to have the service deliberately and devotionally offered.

A clerical writer in a Church newspaper said some time ago that excellence in reading the service was of no importance. "God understood the language, and the simple utterance was all He expected of men." And yet, in the olden time, all defective animals, the blind the lame, and the sick, were declared to be unfit for sacrifice because they indicated a want of reverence for God. He still looks for the best we have to offer, and if we refuse it, the slipshod and undevotional prayer will turn into our own bosom.

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ONLY from the solid ground of some clear creed have men done good, strong work in the world. Only out of certainty comes power.—*Phillips Brooks*.