

have been taken from life, and the eye has communicated directly to the tongue, and the tongue to the hearer the living outlines of the scene, before the whole has been put into the book. Try to re-write it and the life vanishes in the process.

(4) The student will discover many other qualities of the Scripture before he is done with this work. His final conclusion will be very far from his first. He will recognize in the Bible the highest expression of religious truth—many things which in the attempt to reproduce them, show conclusively that no paraphraser can either wholly grasp their contents or so adequately express it. He will give up his notion of re-writing the Bible or any part of it. Thus his constant practice of undertaking to paraphrase the material will not only result in giving him a better understanding of the Scripture, but will afford him a most satisfying sense of those characteristics of the Written Word, which he cannot better account for than by ascribing them to a Divine influence.—*Old and New Testament Student.*

THE LONG PRAYER.

A lady of some humor (may her tribe increase!) quietly hinted to her pastor the other day that he should have some consideration for the people who could not sleep during a long prayer. For a moment he did not see the point of the gentle sarcasm; but light dawns even upon the dullest in time. And he, not being "deep versed in books and shallow in himself," a responsive smile soon flitted across his face.

For, if the truth must out, rude memories of that same long prayer were at once set quietly passing through his mind. A certain hot June Sunday evening long ago, in the days of his merry student life, was flashed with lightning quickness before his eyes, and he saw himself in a crowded church, whither he had gone to hear a popular divine. And during the long prayer, with head decorously leaned on the front of the pew—our horrid modern substitute for kneeling—helped by the genial warmth, and the gentle monotone of the preacher's voice, he slept the sleep of healthy youth. When suddenly, in the very midst of his unholy slumber, disturbed by the rush through his brain of an exciting scene in yesterday's cricket match, his head slipped with a loud bang (as it seemed) from its narrow resting-place, and a roar of tremendous cheering at the fall of the champion's wicket deafened his ears. And he remembered how, shamed in his own eyes, and confident that half the congregation had witnessed his disgrace, he spent a miserable hour of angry penitence in that aristocratic church.

So the minister was forced to admit that there

might be some legitimate objection, on the part of very wide-awake people, to this precise means of grace. And this set him thinking.

Why is there a long prayer in the usual Sunday services of a Congregational church? Who instituted the long prayer? What is his name, and what is his father's name? By whose authority was the devotional part of a service in a Congregational church divided, for all time, into a brief opening prayer, the long prayer, and the benediction? One trembles at his own temerity in daring to ask these questions.

Of the prayer itself, *qua* prayer, I do not speak. I hold no brief for criticising even the humblest and the lowliest minister of God, when he leads the devotions of Christ's people in his Master's house. But ministers are men, and being men, must at times experience the weariness of soul, the absence of that alertness of mind and spirit which makes the long prayer a wearisome effort. And, if I may quote an expressive line from Milton, the best must sometimes feel that they can "find no end in wandering mazes lost." For the widest charity compels one to declare that the long prayer does frequently seem to wander away and get lost in the broad universe of things it attempts to explore. I have sympathy with the, perhaps, apocryphal story of a minister who, after a prolonged exhortation, when exclaiming, "And now, Lord, what more shall we say," was startled by a voice from the pew, crying, "Say Amen! say Amen!"

What shall be done? Is not the time come for a general movement in our churches for the revision of the whole method of worship? I think it is. Could not the Congregational Union give attention to the matter? It has given us a hymn-book; let it give us guidance in the revision of the whole service of the church. Many a minister who shrinks from making changes individually would gladly do so if a general movement took place. That some such movement is needed there can be no manner of doubt. But in these times of fierce aggression, of socialistic growth, and deeper feelings of active brotherhood, we are needing sorely some well-devised revision of our services which will give to the congregation a nobler and less quiescent part in the worship of God's house. That great question I only hint at. In one particular alone have I ventured to point out at length that a new generation has some reason on its side when it cries out loudly for a change.

H. B. S. K.

CHINA reports 32,000 native Christians, who gave, year before last, \$38,000 for missionary work.—*Home Missionary.*