

THE PRAYER MEETING.

Dr. Cuyler writes thus about prayer meeting. "A cardinal fault with many devotional meetings is that they are too artificial. Imagine one of the household gatherings of the late Christmas season to be conducted in the same rigid cut and dried formality that freezes so large a number of Christ's household services. Solemnity and reverence befit a service of worship, but they need not forbid freedom or freeze up the instinctive utterances of love and fellowship. It is better that some persons say too much or say very unprofitable things than that a gag should be put into the mouths of God's people. Doubtless silly things without number were spoken at Christmas dinners, but what parent would have been so absurd as to rap on the table and request his son John to make a few remarks, and then ask Sarah to please to follow whether she had anything to say or not. Love breeds liberty. But in what should be pre-eminently an unconstrained love feast of Christ's children, a presiding officer often undertakes to control the whole conversation. He requests one brother to speak when he may have nothing to say and another brother to lead in prayer when the poor man's heart is not led to ask for anything. There is no prayer in him just then, but being summoned to call upon God he arises and repeats the formula of devotion which is as meaningless as a crier's proclamation in a court room. Nobody has a moral right to make such demands at random and if people thus called on would often decline the performance of what their own hearts do not prompt to bad custom would sooner be extinguished. Every prayer meeting should be open to every one who has a petition to offer a confession to make an experience to relate a Bible passage to quote or a counsel to present. Neither age, sex, color, or social caste should be a padlock on the lips. Ten meetings are killed by formality where one is endangered by the abuse of Christian freedom."

These remarks on the prayer meeting are well worthy of consideration by all our congregations. Is our weekly meeting as interesting, edifying and profitable as it should be. In many of our churches the exercises are limited to the leader and to those whom he may designate. A new departure in this respect if it could be effected would be productive of good. In a social prayer service brains do not weigh as much as hearts and if hearts

have been touched they will be constrained to utter petitions or to tell something of what God has done for their souls. There should be no aimless praying and no one man controlling a gracious gathering of Christ's disciples. When so few wait on God at the weekly meeting may we not well consider what can be done to secure a larger attendance. A personal canvass on the part of those who do attend, greater encouragement given to those who may be timid to open their hearts and lips, and an outpouring of the Spirit would effect a thorough revolution. In the Free Church of Scotland during this winter a large number of congregations are using the Pilgrim's Progress. The characters of Bunyan are taken up as subjects for prayer and meditation. The result has been in every case a large attendance and a greater interest has been awakened.

If all our utterances at the Prayer Meeting were from the heart what a quickening of graces, and what a shower of blessings we might expect, and the weekly service in our congregations would be a most delightful one.

He has a respect for religion." Is it possible? How vastly condescending! How deeply humble! The creature has a respect for service of the Creator! A grasshopper deigns to acknowledge that it has a respect for the Kings of kings and Lord of lords. Verily, a subject of congratulation for the universe! A worm crawling in the dust confesses to its fellow worm that it has some respect for the government of the "high and mighty One that inhabiteth eternity."—*Dr. Mullenberg.*

We acknowledge ourselves naked of all virtue, that we may be clothed by God empty of all good, that we may be filled by Him; slaves to sin, that we may be liberated by Him; lame, that we may be led by Him; weak, that we may be supported by Him; divest ourselves of all ground of glorying, that He alone may be eminently glorious, and that we may glory in Him.—*Calvin.*

Hell is as ubiquitous as a condemning conscience.—*F. W. Robertson.*