

only permitted the people to sing the words of Dr. Watts. The Independents, however, have grown more catholic in the matter of hymns ; perhaps some day the Church of England will grow more catholic in the matter of prayer, and allow her congregations to use what prayers as she now allows them to sing what hymns they like. In the nature of things there is no more reason for uniformity in prayer than in praise. There are some Churchmen who desire uniformity in both cases, and look forward to the time when their Church shall have a Book of Common Praise as she now has a Book of Common Prayer. But the drift of feeling is in the opposite direction, and it is more likely that variety will invade the domain of prayer than that uniformity will prevail in that of praise.

This variety in praise is partly due to the fact that hymn-singing in the Church of England is a late innovation, and is therefore marked by the modern spirit which tends away from uniformity. Had hymns been introduced into the Episcopal Church at an earlier era—in the Tudor instead of the Hanoverian dynasty—there would probably have been an authorised hymnal as there is an authorised prayer-book. Indeed, when the Psalms formed the only praise-book of the Episcopal Church, each version adopted had to secure royal permission. But that age has passed. Where uniformity has been secured, it may be maintained ; but the parties in the Established Church are too many and too pronounced in their ideas to allow of any further attempts to introduce uniformity into new regions. In that of hymn-singing freedom is and probably will remain the rule. Even the most conservative, when they have tasted the sweets of freedom, do not readily forego her delights. The stoutest Anglican would like freedom to alter the Prayer-Book in a sacramentarian direction, as would the most Calvinistic Low Churchman, provided it were in the direction of a less sacramentarian and a more pronounced Evangelicalism. To construct an authorised hymnal for the Church of England would probably raise a storm which the authorities of that Church (if indeed there be such) would find themselves unable to quell. "Let well alone" is therefore seen to be the true policy.