

'IT COMES FROM ABOVE.'—There was once in France a poor boy, who was called 'Little Peter.' He was an orphan, and begged his bread from door to door. He sang very prettily, and people seldom sent him away empty-handed. It was an idle and uncomfortable life he led, but Peter had no one to care for him, and he did not know what else to do.—He had the singular custom of saying on every occasion, 'It comes from above.' I will tell you why.

When his father was on his death-bed—if, indeed, he had a bed, for he was very poor—he said to his son, 'My dear Peter, you will not be left alone, and many troubles you will have in the world. But always remember, that all comes from above; then you will be able to bear everything with patience.'

Little Peter understood him, and in order not to forget the words, he often thought them aloud. He acknowledged every gift with the words, 'It comes from above.' As he grew up, he used to consider what the expression meant. He was intelligent enough to see, that as God rules the world, we may well believe of everything that happens in the way of His providence, 'It comes from above.'

This faith of Little Peter frequently turned out for his benefit. Once, as he was passing through the town, a sudden wind blew off a roof-tile, which fell on his head, and struck him to the ground. His first words were, 'It comes from above.' The bystanders looked, and thought he must be out of his senses, for of course it could not fall from below; but they did not understand him. A minute after, the wind tore off another roof in the same street, which crushed three men to death. Had little Peter gone on, he would probably have been at that moment just where the roof fell.

Another time, a distinguished gentleman employed to carry a letter to a neighboring town, bidding him make all haste. On his way he tried to spring over a ditch, but it was so wide that he fell in, and was nearly drowned. The letter was lost in the mud, and could not be recovered. The gentleman was angry, and little Peter told him of his misfortune, and drove him out of doors with his whip. 'It comes from above,' said Peter, as he stood on the steps. The next day the gentleman sent for him. 'See here,' said he, 'there are half a crown for you for tumbling into the ditch. Circumstances have so changed on a sudden, that it would have been a misfortune to me had that letter reached me.'

I could tell you much more about Peter. When he became a great boy, he was still called 'Little Peter.' A rich gentleman who came into the town having heard his story, sent for him in order to give him something. When little Peter entered the room, the Englishman said, 'What think you, Peter: why have I sent for you?' 'It comes from above,' replied Peter, and the gentleman greatly pleased the gentleman. After a while, he said, 'You are right: I will take your service, and provide well for you. Will you say that?' 'It comes from above,' answered Peter. 'God is very good to me: I will gladly go with you.'

The rich Englishman took him away. It was a blessing for the poor boy, who had been taught no other. Long afterwards, we learned that when his father died, he left him a large sum of money to carry on his business, and that 'Little Peter' was then a rich man in Birmingham. But he still said, of every occurrence, 'It comes from above.'—*Dr. Darby.*

Selections.

ESSAY OF RETURNING UNION.—The following remarks which we take from the *English Churchman* are all from dissenting authorities in England. They are singularly strong both in the conviction and in the force of the faults of their own system, and also in their disposition to look to the Church's ways (of course with alterations) for something better.

At the autumnal meeting of 'The Congregationalists of England and Wales,' held at Manchester, Mr. H. Hall, a minister, said—

'It would suggest, moreover, that much good might be done by the introduction into some of the churches of a little of the Liturgical element.'

T. Binney, a celebrated Independent minister,

would like, Sir, to direct the attention of the meeting to the question of Liturgies, and to urge upon the necessity of greater spirituality, in the services of our churches (Hear, hear.) In this respect we are very deficient. We are, perhaps, inferior to the Christian denomination in this respect. As I preached an ordination sermon, we, as Congregationalists, as a body, are very deficient in the ceremonial reverence; and I think that the same is exhibited in ordination services, and

that want chiefly among ministers. My heart has often been torn at an ordination. The ministers seem to think they have nothing to do with the matter of worship. Whenever there is a little bit of a hymn sung, they seem to think it is quite another part of the service, and out they go into the vestry. . . . They seem to have no respect to the deep devotion which should characterize the service, and no regard to the example they set to the people; but they seem to imagine that the whole of the devotional service may be trampled under foot. I beseech my brethren to look at this subject. I am not going to say Liturgies would increase a spirit of devotion. I don't know, but I think that if the people were brought more into active employment with the service, it might react upon our own feelings as ministers, and tend to reproduce a like spirit among the people.

Mr. Baldwin Brown, another minister, 'thought they ought, might when desirable, have a portion of the service Liturgical, and a portion free.'

These speeches called forth some letters in the *Christian Times*, a dissenting paper, which devotes considerable attention to the affairs of the Church.—One correspondent suggests—

'That a committee of thirteen ministers, who approve of a short Liturgy, should be united, money collected, a prize of £50 offered for the best services for morning, afternoon, and evening, not exceeding half an hour each in length, taken as much as can be wisely done from the two services of the established Church, and of course altered where necessary, leaving full liberty to the minister to offer up his own extempore prayer before and after the sermon: introducing more singing, and even chanting where it can be well done; and an exposition of part of a chapter, as well as the sermon. The minister may use only one of these services if he thinks proper. This short Liturgy would be more interesting to the people, when used to it, than standing silent for half an hour and sometimes longer, hearing the same voice, and frequently, no doubt, the same petitions, Sunday after Sunday, from the same minister, whose voice they again hear, it may be, in three sermons every Sunday. What a relief this would be to a stated minister, who, no doubt, finds it more difficult to vary his expressions in his prayers than in his sermon. There are certain prayers and thanksgivings which must generally be offered to the Throne of Grace in public worship, (see 1 Timothy ii.) and these being concluded in the Liturgy, the minister would have more time for prayer on spiritual and experimental subjects—the success of the Word of God, and the influence of the Holy Spirit to render that Word effectual. Though, as Mr. Binney says, a Liturgy should not be adopted merely for the sake of attraction, yet I fully believe it would have that effect. Thousands complain of the length and repetitions of the English service, and were such a reformed Prayer-book as I suppose, to be got into general use, money being collected for printing thousands of them at a reduced price, it might lead at last to a reform in the national Prayer-book. If such a society were to be formed for this purpose, and a collection made, you may set me down £5 towards it.'

Mr. James Richards, also a minister, writes—

'My own feelings have long been in sympathy with some of the views and suggestions presented in the document referred to, and still more with those expressed by the excellent Mr. Hall—especially in his latter explanatory observations—during the recent meetings at Manchester. . . . It strikes me, however, that such an innovation upon Nonconformist simplicity, as some would deem a Liturgy, would be more likely to succeed within the walls of a new, than of an older sanctuary. I may, perhaps, be permitted to say, that in the devotional part of the Service connected with my own Ministry, there has long been the addition of chanted portions of Scripture, and that not merely with the concurrence, but with the decided approbation of the Church, and even of the senior members.'

'May I suggest, as the result of personal observation whether the want of success alluded to by some of the brethren at Manchester, in those places where the English Liturgy has been used, may not be partly ascribed to the undevotional and slovenly manner in which it has been read, and the excessive mutilation employed? . . . Cherishing such opinion, I approve the suggestion of a new and distinct compilation, though I submit that half an hour, especially when free prayer (which I could never omit) is to follow, should be deemed the maximum length of any Liturgical worship. I would also suggest the advantage of a series of Services, somewhat varied, and adapted, for, say, four Sundays: a plan acted on till recently by a congregation in this neighborhood.'

The following letter, from a Presbyterian, is so remarkable, striking, and instructive, even in these days, that we make no apology for giving it at length—

'Sir.—What a beautiful spirit is that of Paul! what fine sentiments are those in his Epistle to the Romans? 'Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.' And again, 'We ought not to please ourselves, but our neighbor, for his good to edification, for even Christ pleased not Himself.' And again, 'Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

'I was delighted with the letter of 'V. D. M.' in your last, on the all important subject of Public Wor-

ship. It was most suggestive, and also as I think most conclusive, and quite in the spirit and according to the injunctions of the Apostle quoted above. As a Dissenter or Nonconformist, I confess I was hitherto opposed to any thing like a Liturgy in our Churches. It might do very well, serve very conveniently I thought, for such Ministers, and the people satisfied with such as had not the gift or the spirit of prayer: but to bind down such men as Hall and Binney, and their hearers with them, to one stereotyped set of prayers all the year over, whatever be the emergency, whatever the changes or the signs of the times, this I think most unreasonable and absurd. But what am I to think, what shall I say or do, when I find these very men in favour of a Liturgy? Surely it becomes me to pause and to examine the soundness of my former opinion; and to let the letter of your correspondent come most opportunely to my help.

Our themes of praise, some of them at least, are printed and in the hands of the worshippers, to be sung or chanted by them: why should not some at least of the prayers be before the people, that they may fully and heartily enter into them, and be prepared to respond or to utter the loud simultaneous Amen? Why should all the wants and petitions of 'the great congregation' be left to the judgement or the memory of one man however gifted? How can we all be known to him? Besides he is not always in the spirit of prayer, our mind sometimes may be badly fettered or disturbed: this does not greatly or so much affect the discourse which has been prepared at home in the seclusion of his study, and when he was in trim for the work; and perhaps he has his notes along with him; and moreover the discourse being addressed only to men, and subject to their opinion, acceptance or otherwise, is not so sacred or solemn as the prayer. This latter is addressed to God: addressed by the Minister to God, not for himself alone, or chiefly or perhaps at all, but for the people, and as their mouth and wisdom. What a startling position for a man to occupy? What a serious consideration! What a fearful responsibility! He may say too much—he may say too little—he may say nothing at all to the purpose—he may pray his hearers into a devotional frame—he may pray them out of it—or let his prayer be exactly what it should be, should he or can he alter it every day? and if he does not is it not a set form of prayer? But in the last place, there may be stranger worshippers present, who prefer a Liturgy, and cannot be edified without it. Should we not 'please' them? Let not Mr. Binney be afraid to 'attract' them—Paul enjoining it—nor was he afraid to 'catch even by guile,' or to 'become all things to all men' lawfully of course, 'that he might gain some.'

Your correspondent's plan is calculated, is worthy I think, to please all parties—Conformists and Nonconformists, Churchmen and Dissenters. 'A short Liturgy—taken as much as can be wisely done, from that of the Established Church, altered of course where necessary: and leaving full liberty (and time) to the Minister to offer up his own extempore prayer before and after the Sermon.'

This 'short Liturgy' or Service, 'adapted for morning, afternoon and evening, and never exceeding half an hour in length,' would at once interest the people, relieve or assist the Minister, and allow ample opportunity for such occasional topics of prayer and thanksgiving, as the circumstances of the times might suggest or require.

I am sorry I do not exactly agree with your correspondent as to the best mode of procuring the best work for the purpose. Might it not be committed, as was the translation of our Bible, to a company of devout and competent men, appointed by the Churches? Or might it not be accepted, as were our Psalms and hymns, at the hand of a man, or at the hands of men endowed and stirred up by the Spirit of all Grace and Wisdom to prepare it?

At the same time I so heartily approve of the thing, and so impatiently long for it, that if 'a prize of £50' be thought necessary, or likely to procure it best and most speedily, I shall most gladly put my pound to your correspondent's fire, and hail the day (if spared to see it) when this work should be received and sanctioned throughout the Churches.

Yours, &c.

J. H. W. a Presbyterian.

Nov. 15.

Diocesan Church Society.

FOR THE CHURCH TIMES.

THE Annual Meeting of the Taro Branch of the Diocesan Church Society, was held at the Parochial School House, on the evening of Tuesday the 17th of January.

The proceedings were commenced by singing the Missionary Hymn and the offering up of prayer.

The Rev. the Rector took the chair. After the delivery of a brief address from the Chairman, wherein among other topics, the claims, utility, and advancement of the Society were set forth, the following Resolutions were offered to the meeting:

No. 1.—Reviewing the good which the Society has been the means of doing during the past year, we have good reason to thank God, and to place full reliance on His under a grateful sense of His Fatherly care and love for us; and to exert ourselves in aid of the benevolent objects contemplated by the Diocesan Church Society.

Moved by T. J. Brown, Esq., seconded by G. J. Wigles.

No. 2.—That although we have this good reason for reliance on the Almighty, still we have no right to look for its continuance, unless we engage and exert ourselves to our utmost in behalf of our Diocesan Society; and that we may look up with confidence in His gracious promises of co-operation with our earnest, although poor endeavours.