

LIBERTY IN ACCOMMODATING THE SERVICES OF THE CHURCH.

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ONE of the chief arguments brought against the Church by outsiders is her rigidity and the inflexible uniformity of her services and methods. This the "Book Annexed" was proposed to remedy in the American Church. From present appearances, however, the remedy will not come in that shape. But if she is thus rigid and inflexibly uniform, it may well be asked if she is a sinner in this respect beyond any of the denominations outside herself, many of whom are bound hand and foot by iron-clad trust deeds, whose strict letter prevents their ministers from swerving a hairs-breadth from the, in so many cases, old-fashioned and cruelly unscriptural doctrines of the age that invented them, or, as in the case of the Presbyterians, are so yoked to the terms of some confession, such as that of Westminster, as to be forbidden to preach or teach anything that shall militate against its narrow limits. The rigidity and uniformity of the services of the Church, however, if really present, is part of her legacy from Reformation times, when the various "uses" such as those of Sarum, Bangor, and the rest, each in itself a protest against the iron-clad formularies of Rome were reduced to one, which was to serve for the whole Church in England. Thus, while the Reformation granted the fullest spiritual liberty, it abridged the personal liberty hitherto accorded the Anglican bishops and their diocesan Synods of modifying by addition to, or taking away from the established ritual. But the intention of the Reformer, however good in itself, was the parent of a certain narrowness and restrictiveness, which was largely made use of as a handle by those who, being in reality opposed to the Church's doctrines, pretended that their opposition was not to the faith, but to the principle of being bound down to one form of prayer, and thereby restrained in their "liberty of prophesying." Hence arose a spirit of kicking against the Prayer Book, which, in its turn, was the parent of heresy and schism. On the same principle, therefore, that the formularies of the Church do not fully state the wants of the age either liturgically or devotionally; but chiefly on the ground that the clergy are perforce wedded to a rigid conformity to a service which, it is claimed, is unsuitable to the spiritual wants, not only of the "classes," but principally of the "masses," has arisen within our own borders this cry, if not for the immediate approval of the "Book Annexed" at the ensuing General Convention, at least, for the accordance of greater liberty to the clergy in accommodating their services to the necessities each man of his own parish or mission. Some would have each bishop draw up, as some have drawn up, services suitable for churches in which missions are to be held, as well as for every other conceivable occasion. Others would go further, the Church faring the worse, and would allow the bishop of the diocese to authorize each or any priest, discreet

or indiscreet, to adapt his services to his own peculiar views, or to make them suit whatever fearful and wonderful function he might choose to hold in his Church, provided only he "kept to Prayer Book lives." Neither of these propositions can be tolerated for a moment. The first would be tantamount to having as many "uses" as there are dioceses, whereby the old pre-Reformation confusion would be rendered worse confounded, and the consciences of many priests be occasionally sorely exercised, if they were put under any species of obligation to make use of them. The second would involve bishop and priest in perpetual conflict, and would besides open the door not only to fancy and unliturgical ritual, but to the Romanizer on the one side, and on the other to the brother of tendencies, Plymouth-wise to introduce a strange and unwarrantable ceremonial which would speedily turn the church into a veritable city of confusion. Besides these objections it may well be asked, "Have the laity no wishes or rights in the matter?" Is not the fact too strangely overlooked that these have a just right to join in the Common Prayer of the church, that form in which each was educated, to which he has been accustomed all his life, the love for which has grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength. But, if once the door is opened to the possibility of change in the order of conducting the services, not for good reason, but as any priest shall choose, then the laity will no longer be able to join heart and soul in the old familiar ritual of his Mother Church wherever his lot may be cast, but, when he finds himself in a strange diocese, perhaps, even in a strange though neighboring parish, will be lost in wonder and amaze as to what form of sound words he is listening to, and what form of doctrine he is supposed to be endorsing by taking part in sacred rites with whose nature he is utterly unacquainted, even though they may be "conducted on Prayer Book lines," a very convenient style of liberty which too often degenerates into utter and unbridled license. The various "uses" already prevailing often render it impossible for the worshipper who is accustomed to the true and only Prayer Book "use" to know what is going on, or to join intelligently in the service, especially that of the Holy Communion, and this confusion it is not desirable to increase, even though certain "*desiderata*" may be occasionally longed for. At present it is better to "bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of."

HEALTH.

A FEW words about health may not be out of place in a paper devoted to the higher interests of men and women, for upon health, or wholeness of body, depends in no small measure health of mind and soul. So long as we are what we are—thus marvellously made—a trinity in unity—this is inevitable, and unless a perfect balance is maintained between the different parts of man's nature evil effects must follow. If we consider not only

that the "Word was made flesh," but that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, we shall surely give them all honour, while keeping them in due subjection. How could the true physician be what he indeed is, a "fellow-worker with GOD"—bringing harmony out of discord, order out of confusion, good out of evil—were he not convinced that the Heavenly Father, who is perfect, desires perfection in His creatures; that He permits suffering as He does sin, for some inscrutable purpose, but that both are alike hateful in His eyes? Did not His beloved Son go about doing good and healing all? Was not His work to save the bodies as well as the souls of men—the one from suffering, the other from sin?

So much has been done to elevate pain that one is almost inclined to glorify it, and to pity those who are exempt from suffering. But are not these morbid ideas? Might one not as well endeavour to analyse fear, or mental anguish, or any other keen sensation, as to analyse pain, or translate physical grief from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light? We hear, too, of "sanctified affliction," which is in truth a lovely thing; but let us bear in mind that it is the beauty of holiness we admire, not the beauty of affliction, and that the fruits of righteousness it bears—such as patience, fortitude, self-control—might be exercised as brightly in a wider and a nobler sphere. Real harm is unintentionally done by the most excellent people, who either look upon suffering as a direct curse—"Who hath sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"—or, on the contrary, imagine the sufferer to be a special object of Divine love and favor. To the former, the answer of the Master may suffice, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents." To the latter we may suggest that there is no effect without its cause, that if we break a natural, which is also a Divine, law—willingly or ignorantly—we must inevitably suffer; that—breaking these laws—we can no more hope to be saved from penalties than a child putting its finger into the flame can be saved from suffering by the most tender parent. As Sir Andrew Clark said not long ago in his beautiful words about health: "Nature is long-suffering, but she is not merciful. The most solemn truth which my profession has taught me is that nature is implacable; she never forgets, and she never forgives."

Undoubtedly there are those who, having no special call to exertion and little to occupy their thoughts—having, in fact, plenty of time "to be ill"—take more than needful care of themselves. Possessing, perhaps, a languid temperament—mental as well as physical—with no great suffering, they pass through life in a sort of twilight state, and would hardly care to see the blessed sunshine or to feel the fresh breezes; preferring the immunities and privileges of invalidism to the busy hum of life and the jostle of the crowd. They cannot eat, because they have "no appetite," or discontinue a prescribed diet, because they are "tired of it." They make no unselfish efforts to get well, and become a trial to themselves and to all around