

service of prayer; and no doubt occasionally they have some cause for complaint. It is not an unusual experience with good men, to so completely forget themselves in prayer, because they are then enjoying communion with God, that afterwards they have only a very vague recollection of what they said. They are not competent to form a correct estimate of their own prayers; but their congregations sometimes conclude that they are not so edifying, or inspiring, as they think they ought to have been. The leader has edified and profited himself; but he has not profited God's people to the extent that they had a right to expect.

There are some ministers, and laymen also, who, although they are strongly opposed to a liturgy, have themselves a well defined circle of expressions, beyond which they seldom venture; and which, although they are capable of being adjusted in a variety of combinations, usually fall into a particular order, so that the stated hearer can tell pretty well what is coming. It is manifest that such a form of prayer has all the defects of a prayer book, without any of its excellences. Perhaps some of us, who think that there is a good deal of variety and richness in our public prayers, would be disappointed with an unexpected sameness, and many weary some repetitions, if we could compare verbatim reports of them for a number of Sabbaths.

It is said, that when Charles I. was confined in Carisbrook Castle, he was visited by the Rev. Alexander Henderson of the Scottish Church, who repeatedly asked the privilege of engaging in prayer with him. After several refusals the monarch at length assented, having previously placed a short-hand writer behind the arras, to take down every word that the divine should say. In a few days Charles took the paper from his pocket, and asked Mr. Henderson what he thought of this strange religious rhapsody. After reading it over very carefully, and never suspecting the source of it, Henderson exclaimed, "Why, this is rank blasphemy!" A Congregational minister of New England once employed a stenographer to take down his prayers every Sabbath for months, that he might criticise them himself; and he was often very much surprised, as well as mortified, at the result.

Many influences have tended to deepen and freshen the current of public devotion in the country during the last quarter of a century. The ardour with which evangelistic work has been prosecuted, has cultivated a directness and intensity of appeal, which was not so general before. The increased number of laymen who now lead in prayer in almost every congregation, some of them richly gifted in this direction, has broadened the social devotions of every community, and introduced a mu