

their sports. And, therefore, allusions to the passing events of their experience, to the little incidents of the community, and to their individual trials, if made in a manly tone and with some delicacy of expression, are apt to engage their interest, and aid the best impression of the service. The differing usages of sects, as well as early associations, will have much to do in determining the frequency and particularity of such allusions. It is of the utmost consequence to avoid what may provoke comments, excite curiosity, or raise so much as a question of taste. Undoubtedly those are everywhere the best public prayers which at once enlist the most entire and respectful attention, by their fitness, variety and earnestness, while they are being offered, and are afterwards treated with silence. For, in respect to worship, considered as a product of human thought or originality, silence is a higher tribute than the most approving criticism—except, perhaps, in those confidential intimacies where friends take sacred counsel together about the deepest things. And whatever the specific mention of the supplication may be, it will never be invested with so august a dignity, nor raised so completely above all cavil or levity, as when it can be put into some words out of the Inspired Book.

It is an interesting inquiry, what other exercises should attend the offering of prayer. But in this regard we apprehend there is already a considerable uniformity of usage, and that the simple schedule usually followed is not far from the best. Of course the Scriptures will be read. Here again let there be no formality. Let the passages be selected from different parts of the volume; and they may be profitably selected from almost every part of both the New Testament and the Old. Sometimes a consecutive passage, or even a short book, may be read on successive days, with a certain advantage in keeping up the connection in the narrative or argument. But sequences of that sort often fall, we have thought, into a kind of visible mechanism, which young men do not love. It looks like a saving of trouble, and they feel put upon. Further, the Bible is not to be read as if it were an exercise in elocution. The grand object is to bring out the meaning, and get it in contact with the hearer's soul, with as little showing of self as possible. Whoso has reached into the depths of the Bible's heart will read it well. Some men's reading of it is more original, more suggestive of new ideas, than some other men's sermons. And this is no declaimer's device. It comes by a profound spiritual acquaintance with the inmost sense of that revelation of the mind of Christ. Whether brief remarks could be profitably thrown in, not to convey doctrine, but simply to uncover and explain the text, is worthy of consideration.

In some of our colleges the Scriptures and the prayer are accompanied by a hymn, sung by a choir, or, perhaps better yet, by the general body of the students. We are convinced the value of this addition cannot well be over-estimated. In all true, simple sacred music there, is a nameless effect of good, against which few exceptional breasts are wholly steeled. It falls in with the better inclinations and hopes. It soothes irritability. It abates appetite. It shames meanness and lust. It assists the incipient resolves of the penitent. It comforts grief. It puts the whole mind into a more appropriate attitude for the prayer that comes after, unconsciously opening the hidden avenues by which heavenly blessings flow down to nourish the growths of character. Probably this effect lies more with the strain of harmony than with the words. Hence the greatest pains and discretion are to be used in fixing the style of the music,—seeking to combine the noblest practicable artistic with the purest religious expression, attaining animation without a florid movement, and solemnity rather than surprises or startling transitions. Operatic flourishes and complicated fugues are as much out of place in chapel as rhetorical confessions of sin. Chants, if there is patience enough for the discipline and practice, are more appropriate for praise than any kind of psalmody. If a hymn is sung, let it be a hymn. A hymn is not a chapter of didactics, nor a moral essay, nor a piece of reasoning, nor a precept, nor a creed, nor an exhortation, nor a narrative, nor a catalogue of virtues, nor an inventory of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. A hymn is an aspiration cast into poetical language. Its purpose is to stir devout feelings,—at the same time conducting the soul in a penitential or jubilant frame to heaven, and quickening within it those social affections of humanity which prove mankind to be of one blood, in one brotherhood, under one Father. Nor can any group of human beings be anywhere found in whom these sentiments may be often waked to a grander purpose than a band of companions, already associated in the little commonwealth and the intense politics of their academic economy, and destined soon to take central and commanding places in the nation, for Christ, or against him.

Recent debates, in many quarters, have broached the question whether congregational worship is not, in some sense, disowning its own name, by being practically the least congregational of any worship in the world. Even if the sacerdotal idea has gone out, a service confined exclusively to one officiating individual retains the priest. To what extent a liturgical practice might be advantageously introduced into our colleges, where men of all denominations are assembled, is a point to be determined rather by cautious and guarded experi-

ment than by preconceived opinion, or precipitate guess-work. We cannot conceive why such experiment should not be freely made, and conducted with forbearance and good-will on all sides. Among all parties there is, as we suppose, a common interest: in finding out the best mode. Surely we can afford, at this time of day, to purify ourselves of the sectarian suspicion and the ecclesiastical narrowness which would reject the best, or refuse to search for it because it might involve the adoption of a neighbor's way, instead of the pursuit of our own. We confess ourselves inclined to believe that if the Scriptures could be generally read alternately, as according to the Hebrew parallelism, or responsively, between the minister and the congregation, in our colleges as well as in the churches, it would aid the whole object, by giving the laymen something to do, by enlivening the mind, by fixing the eye, by engaging two senses and a tongue in the service, instead of hearing alone. A free use of different methods is better than bondage to any one. Respecting the prayer itself, we feel very sure of this; it should be either expressly and obviously liturgical, or else be strictly extemporaneous, having the natural verbal variety of a spontaneous exercise. What pretends to be the latter, and yet consists of a familiar repetition of clauses, whether following in a certain order or not, is almost certain to become subject, at last, to unfavorable notice, and to fix upon the service a reputation of heartless routine.

Common sense and observation teach that the entire daily service should be short,—not extending over twenty minutes, altogether, at the longest. Fifteen are better than twenty. It is idle to attempt settling this matter by abstract notions, or to chafe at necessity, or to expect a promiscuous troop of boys, or men either, to be saints, and to keep positions of discomfort all the more quietly because they fatigue the limbs. Edification is the object, and edification should supply the rule.

And, as to the bodily posture, there is still occasion for experiment. It ought certainly to be uniform throughout the room. Sabbath assemblies may continue to affront decency, by the present mixed and vulgar manners, if they will; but in the decorum of a college or school such irregularity should be forbidden as an offence. If principles of absolute adaptation and correspondence were to govern the matter, there could be no doubt that the three appropriate postures for the house of God would be *standing during praise* (i. e., in all singing and the responsive readings of the Bible), *kneeling or inclining the head and body during confession and prayer*, and *sitting to hear the discourse*, or the lessons read, by the minister. In daily chapel services this order may be found impracticable, on the score of the maintenance of stillness, or the supposed necessity of keeping the persons of the pupils exposed to the eye of the government. Certainly the body during the prayer—the most important of the services—should have the greatest degree of ease consistent with a proper dignity, so as to furnish the least possible disturbance to the mind. Trifling accessories are not to be overlooked. Where it can be done, a palpable help would be gained to the silence, and thus to the just impression of the place, by some sort of carpeting on the floor.

The chief perplexities attending the subject arise from what was just referred to,—the connection of the devotions with the discipline. Just so far as it can possibly be accomplished, that connection ought to be at once and completely dissolved. That this has not been more generally done in our colleges betokens an indifference to the highest claims of religion, and the laws of the spirit, painful to think of. In this direction, as it seems to us, is the great call for reformation. The secular administration of a college is one thing, and should rest on its own legitimate resources. The worship of God is another thing, and should have no other relation to the former than that of a morally pervasive and sanctifying influence. The chapel is not a constabulary contrivance, nor the chaplain a drill-sergeant. The Bible is no substitute for a policeman's club, nor for a proctor's vigilance. In some seminaries, it would appear as if the final cause for prayers were a convenient convocation of the scholars, as a substitute for a roll-call. A spiritual approach to the Almighty Source of Truth should not be compromised by an extrinsic annoyance. If any students come to prayers reluctantly, their reluctance should not be aggravated by the additional odium of an academic economy put under a sacred disguise. Physical constraint should not trust its disagreeable features unnecessarily into the sanctuary. And therefore such arrangements should be secured that, by classes or otherwise, the presence of the students on the spot might be certified at the given hour, independently of the chapel service.

On the other hand, one is easily satisfied that the attendance should be universal, and should be required; and also that entire order and a decorous deportment should be positively enforced under strict sanctions. These are indispensable conditions of any proper effect of the service, whether on the devoutly disposed or the reckless. Moreover, the reasons for them are plain, and find a substantiating authority in every human breast. Let the compulsion be exercised in a kind spirit, and be patiently explained. The reverence that demands it should be evident in the officer's own soul and bearing. Only, behind the rea-