

terranean growls or whisperings behind a man's back.

Mr. Brown.—Well, it is this. Mr. Low came to church last Sunday, when you officiated for the first time, and he says you turned your back upon the people, and that if you do this they will turn their backs upon you. Of course he only speaks for himself, and I don't think any one else would put it so rudely; but I don't quite know how to answer him.

Vicar.—I am, of course, sorry that he or anyone else should come to the house of God to use, as it were, an opera glass or a microscope, instead of worshipping and saying his prayers, but yet I would not assume or believe that he meant to be rude. Ignorance and prejudice often make us speak unadvisedly with our lips and in a way for which we are afterwards sorry. He means, I suppose, that at some parts of the service, for instance, at the Creed, I faced towards the East or altar?

Mr. Brown.—Yes, that is what he means.

Vicar.—And which way were the people facing at that time?

Mr. Brown.—Towards the East, of course; that is the way the seats are arranged, except in some few churches where they face all sorts of ways towards the pulpit, as if we never had to come to church unless there was a sermon, or as if the sermon was always the chief thing in church.

Vicar.—I am glad that you at any rate know that a church is primarily for worship, secondly for prayer, and only thirdly for preaching. But if the people face Eastwards and the clergyman faces Eastwards would common sense and honesty lead one to say that he then turns his back upon the people, or that he faces the same way as his fellow-worshippers?

Mr. Brown.—Of course you face the same way as they do.

Vicar.—Did Mr. Low sit in the last seat in the church, nearest the west door?

Mr. Brown.—No, he sat well up the church.

Vicar.—Then I suppose he might be accused, on his own principle, of turning his back upon many of his fellow-worshippers?

Mr. Brown.—Of course he may. I don't suppose he would like that way of putting it, but what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Vicar.—Precisely. And now what is the office of the parish priest when not engaged in addressing his people? Is it not to be their leader in worship and prayer?

Mr. Brown.—Certainly.

Vicar.—And a leader is usually in front of those he leads, and looks the same way as they do?

Mr. Brown.—That is so.

Vicar.—Then when an officer volunteers to lead a forlorn hope in a siege, do the soldiers grumble and threaten to desert because he turns his back upon them?

Mr. Brown.—They would not be so silly.

Vicar.—When you were married you remember that you stood and knelt before the officiating priest, and that your best man and the bridesmaids were behind you; did they afterwards complain that you had contemptuously turned your back upon them, and that, therefore, they would not come to the wedding breakfast?

Mr. Brown.—That would have been an absurd idea.

Vicar.—And at the funeral the other day you saw the clergyman meet the corpse at the gate, and then, as the rubric directs, "going before it," say the opening sentences of the service. Did the mourners take offence because he had turned his back upon them?

Mr. Brown.—They could have had no such idea. Of course, the leader is in front.

Vicar.—I think, then, you see the common-sense view of the matter, and how little Mr. Low's grumble accords with common-sense. But the question may be approached from another point of view. You know that in the Prayer Book there are rubrics or directions as to how the service shall be performed, and that these rubrics are laws, or byelaws rather, of the English Church, binding on all who as Churchmen accept and use the Prayer-Book?

Mr. Brown.—Yes, I know that; but I don't remember any rubric about facing Eastwards.

Vicar.—Do you remember any rubric ordering the priest to face the people?

Mr. Brown.—Yes, is he not told to turn to the people when he reads the commandments?

Vicar.—Certainly he is. Now take this Prayer Book and see in how many places there is a rubric telling him to turn to the people.

Mr. Brown.—Let me see. Morning Prayer. Nothing there, except that for the reading of the Lessons he is to turn himself "as he may best be heard of all present." Evening Prayer; nothing at all. Athanasian Creed; nothing. Litany; nothing. Prayers and Thanksgiving; nothing. Collects, Epistles, Gospels; nothing. Holy Communion. He is to turn to the people when he rehearses the Ten Commandments.

Vicar.—Excuse me for a moment. If he is specially ordered, after a service has begun, then for a special purpose to turn to the people, does not that assume that previously he has not been facing them?

Mr. Brown.—Of course it does. If he had been always facing them it would be absurd to have a fresh rule to tell him to do so at a given point.

Vicar.—Quite so. The ordinary rule is then that he shall not be staring into the people's faces, as I might express it if I followed Mr. Low's lead, but that at certain times only he shall turn to them. Now look on for other directions to turn to the people.

Mr. Brown.—Only one more in the Communion Service. He is to turn to the people to pronounce the Absolution. Therefore, plainly he had not been turning towards them before that. Baptism services. Nothing. Catechism and Confirmation. Nothing. Marriage. After the Psalm the priest is to turn his face towards those who have been married. Nothing else ordering him to turn to the people down to the end of the Prayer Book.

Vicar.—Then in the whole of the Prayer Book only twice is the priest directed to turn towards the people.

Mr. Brown.—Quite so, but I suppose when he is preaching and giving out hymns and notices he will turn towards them.

Vicar.—Of course he will; and even, though there is no direction for it, in reading those exhortations which are found in nearly every service, and are really short sermons. To put the case shortly, when he speaks to the people he will turn to the people; but when he is speaking on their behalf, and as their mouth-piece and leader to God, there is no reason why he should turn to them or face in a different direction to the rest of his fellow-worshippers. But you said that you recollected no rubric about facing Eastwards. I might, of course, say that no rubric is needed when the custom not merely of the Church of England but of all the Catholic Church is well-known. Still let us see if any rubric suggests or directs that when leading his people the priest should face the same way as they do—which our friend calls turning his back upon them. Common sense suggests that if the people are facing in one direction the priest should not face in the opposite direction if he is their leader. Rubrics ordering him to turn towards them for a special purpose imply, to any honest mind, that he was not previously so turning. But now look at the rubrics in the Communion Service, about which mistakes or objections are most commonly made. Do you see how many rubrics there are directing the priest how or where to stand?

Mr. Brown.—Yes, I see there are six. First he is to be standing at the north side.

Vicar.—Yes, the north side, not the north end. This will make him face east, whereas if he were at the north end he would be facing south.

Mr. Brown.—Then he is to turn to the people. Then he is to stand as before, that is, before he turned to the people. Then, for the second time, he is to turn to the people. Then he is to turn to the Lord's Table (or turn his back to the people, according to the saying of our friend). And then for the Prayer of Consecration it is enjoined that he should be "standing before the Table."

Vicar.—Twice then, and only twice, is he directed to turn to the people by the rubric, for the rehearsing of the Commandments, and giving the Absolution, and in each case he is ordered to turn

back again, and he is left for the chief and essential part of the service "standing before the Table," where he must of necessity be "turning his back upon the people." The only possible positions for him in consecrating are to face south, with his right side to the people north with his left side to the people, or east with his back to the people, or as the special rubric orders in more sensible language "before the people." Three positions are possible, the rubric, following universal custom, dictates the one which shall alone be taken.

Mr. Brown.—The matter is perfectly clear to any one who takes the trouble to think and read; but supposing he says he doesn't care for the rubrics?

Vicar.—Then he is simply in the position of a soldier who says, I don't care for the articles of war; of a Freemason who says, I don't care for the rules of our order; of a Member of Parliament who says, I recognise no duty of obedience to the rules of the House. If a Churchman, he is a member of a society; no society can exist without laws; no one can claim to be a loyal member of any society who rejects its rules.

Mr. Brown.—Well, I hope I can bring him to look at the matter in the common-sense way, but suppose he carries out his threat and leaves the Church?

Vicar.—The Church has weathered many storms, and may survive even such a calamity as that. If, unfortunately, he prefers to retain the captious spirit, and to attend the house of God as a critic rather than a worshipper, he would no doubt be more in his element as a deacon of an Independent congregation with a dependent minister. But please do not assume that he, or anyone else, is not amenable to kindly argument or common-sense. We all need more charity, and to make more allowance for old prejudice and ignorance. I am glad you came to me: but I should have been more glad if he had come himself. Misunderstandings would be very rare if people more frequently put themselves in the way of having them removed, and did not assume that everything was wrong which they did not understand.—*Church Times.*

A BASKET OF FRAGMENTS.

A Christian's life is nothing else but a short trial of his graces.

It will cost nothing to be religious; it will cost more not to be so.

We must know something of heaven upon earth, and if we are destined to know anything of heaven hereafter.

To have one poor sinner own thee, in the day of judgment, as the instrument in God's hands of plucking him as a brand from the burning, will give greater joy than the reputation of being the greatest orator in the world.

He who seldom thinks of heaven is not likely to get thither; as the only way to hit the mark is to keep the eye fixed upon it.

The service of God is the soul's work, and the favor of God is its reward.

The minister who labors solely for a reputation among men, who makes the sublime truths of the Bible, themes for the wanderings of an unsanctified imagination, and Calvary an eminence from which he may exhibit himself, will, of all others, have the most fearful reckoning at the judgment-day.

The reason we do not make greater proficiency in the study of Christianity is because it takes us so long to learn one lesson.

The land in which we live might more properly be called the land of the dying than the land of the living. Where are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the truly good and holy of every age? Where is that dear departed one whose memory you so much love? He has gone to the land of the living, and left you in the land of the dying.

Fear to do wrong, and doing wrong will never cause you to fear.

No man can avoid his own company; so he had best make it as good as possible.

The voice of selfishness—"Send the multitude away." The voice of Compassion—"Give ye them to eat."