

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

Church Ebats.

II.

James—"Well, John, have you been thinking over that matter we were talking of last week? You remember that you promised to tell me some more about our Church service and the reasons why you think it is so good. I always thought the objections to forms of prayer were too serious to be refuted."

John—"Of course there are objections, James, and we ought fairly to face them. There is the objection, for instance, that the repeating of the same words, Sunday after Sunday, engenders formalism and indifference, so that to many the reading of the prayers has no more heart and soul than the ringing of the old church bell. Then there is the cramping of the mind by the form prescribed, and the fettering of liberty so that one cannot go beyond the cut and dried channel. The soul has to go along the same track, just as a train on an iron rail. You must always pray for the same things, and in the same way."

James—"Yes, that's just what I think. There seems to be no liberty at all, and then the prayers are long and dry and dead. The fact is the objections are more serious when you come to look into them, than at first sight."

John—"No, I hardly think that. On the contrary, a closer acquaintance sometimes removes prejudices. There is a story told of the late Mr. Samuel Morley, that once he took up a Prayer Book when in a room at Cambridge, and finding it open at the 25th article, he began reading:—'*Those five commonly-called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance,———*' He impatiently threw down the book exclaiming—'*Why what have you got to do with Penance! and where do you find five Sacraments in the Bible?'*'"

"Read on a few words more, if you please," he was told. So he did.——"*are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel.*" Of course there was a laugh, and Morley, laying down the book, acknowledged the folly of his prejudice, by joining heartily in it. Now I think a good many are like him. They are prejudiced, because they are ignorant, and have never looked seriously into the reasons that cause so many myriads of Christians to love the Prayer Book."

James—"That's not a bad story, I'll admit. So, before judging finally, I'll hear what you have to say."

John—"In the first place then. I would say with regard to the extempore method of prayer in church, that it is not necessarily either true, acceptable or profitable. It may be egotistical declamation, or ignorant rambling, or wearisome repetition. It may be an exhibition of the speaker's praying powers to an audience, listening to hear how well the preacher can pray, or the exposure of the listeners' sins under cover of an address to Almighty God. It may be an 'elegant prayer offered to an audience,' or it may be only a flowery and beautiful arrangement of petitions without any prayer at all, or, it may be the most formal of all formalisms. In fact the ministers of Churches that have not a liturgy are exposed constantly to three great dangers.

"1. The danger of affectation and egotism. The speaker is always liable to thoughts of self and thoughts of his audience.

"2. The danger of ignorance and shallowness. The spiritually minded and deeply taught can pray always to edification; the illiterate and empty frequently to no profit.

"3. The danger of platitudinizing."

James—"What's that?"

John—"It means saying over and over again a flat and dull and stale form of words, as if one were repeating from memory a lesson learned before, without any heart, or life, or power in it. Surely you have heard ministers who pray like that."

James—"Yes, I have. Have heard them often too."

John—"And then, in addition to the dangers from the minister's side, the extempore method of prayer in church has three great practical defects.

"1. It is uncongregational. That is, it has the tendency to make prayer the offering of one man, instead of the whole congregation. I don't say that is the intention of it, but it certainly is the tendency, for the people don't know what's coming and, therefore as I said before, in their curiosity to hear, personal devotion may be swallowed up.

"2. It is wanting often in breadth and fitness. The subjects prayed for are liable to be few and oft repeated. Seldom would you hear, for instance, prayers for prisoners and captives,

travellers, those who slander us, or the heathen. These we pray for always in the Church of England, besides all the reasonable wants of all sorts and conditions of men. And the fitness of the prayer is often as faulty. Grammatical errors or personal mannerisms may spoil it.

"3. It has a tendency to produce irreverence. I am told that it is really distressing, where you go to one of the services of the other religious bodies, to see so many people sitting bolt upright during prayers, without even bending down and closing their eyes, to say nothing of kneeling, just as if they were listening at a lecture."

James—"That's a fact, John. Of course I have always been accustomed to kneel at prayer, and it surprised me, not a little, at the Baptist Tabernacle, to see all the people sitting when the minister began to pray."

John—"Well, it's a very serious thing, and I think, a tendency of the method of prayer they have, as the people don't seem to realize, that it's their prayer, not only the minister's.

"But how the time has gone. I think I'll have to finish some other time."

Halifax, N. S.

DYSON HAGUE.

FOR PARISH AND HOME.

CHRISTIAN UNITY AND LIBERALITY.

THERE are two things that it is well for every Christian to know; first, that there is such a thing as a Church Universal, the great congregation of all who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ; that above and beyond the minor points of difference that separate the various folds of Christ's disciples, there is a higher unity of life and hope and destiny embracing all. Christian unity is not a mere sentiment, but a spiritual fact, as real as the unity of the body.

The second thing that a Christian needs to know is his proper place and sphere in that Church.

A great deal that is said about Christian unity is foolish and destructive to Christian usefulness. "I believe most firmly," said a recent speaker, "in Christian unity, a unity which is not necessarily uniformity; a unity, which like that of the noble forest, with its exquisite blending into one harmonious whole of a thousand varying forms of life, may be manifested in diversity. But I do not