

ART. V.—ATTRACTIVENESS IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES.

THE instinct of reverence is planted in every heart. This instinct requires adequate expression. The expression is found in prayer, and praise, and devotion. Prayer—the pleading of realised want. Praise—the utterance of grateful love. Adoration—the felt wonder and awe of a heart bowed before the majesty, and excellency, and glory of God. These lie at the root of all religious worship; these are the elements of which the sacred incense is composed, which, kindled into a flame by Divine grace, ascends to God as a sweet savour in Christ—in the language of the Song of Songs, “as a pillar of smoke, perfumed with frankincense, and myrrh, and all powders of the merchant.”

Such worship the Christian feels to be the nearest approach to heaven that he can enjoy upon earth. It is one of his greatest pleasures to lay his hopes and fears, his desires and aspirations, the tears of his sorrow and the honours of his thankfulness, at the feet of Him whom, in the spirit of adoption, he can call “Abba, Father.” Alone, in his private chamber; or in the pause from daily toil; or in the field where he meditates at eventide, his heart goes up to God, and for the time being all external things may be so kept in abeyance that “whether he be in the body or out of the body he cannot tell. God knoweth.” In “The Excursion” Wordsworth beautifully expresses my meaning:—

In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request:
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise.

Time and place here are of no concern. Morning, noon, or evening, or in the still watches of the night, it matters not. Nor is it of any moment whether we worship on the mountain-top or in the lowly valley, or on the sounding shore or under the shadowy branches of the over-arching trees. At all times, and in all places, we may have “fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ;” we can “come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

There is no difficulty about worshipping under such circumstances as these. It is when the Christian leaves his solitude,

when he meets his brethren in public assembly, that a difficulty is experienced. It is evident that, when numbers meet together for the purpose of praise and prayer, there must be some forms as vehicles of confession, adoration, petition, thanksgiving. Certain rules must be laid down, certain regulations enjoined, with a view to maintain order and ensure decency. The combined worship of an assembly should have a prescribed ritual, so that while it may be acceptable to God, it may also be profitable to man. This leads us to inquire whether the New Testament provides any standard of ritual for Christian worship, and how far the principle of making our services attractive by art and music, by dress and decoration, is authorised under the present Dispensation, or is profitable to the worshippers themselves. As to the Old, we know that God gave to the Jewish people an imposing ceremonial and an elaborate ritual. Their religious ceremonies were moulded after a pattern which was truly and absolutely of Divine origin. The Levitical system had much sensuous beauty, and much external magnificence. The vestments of the high priest were rich and splendid. The altars were made of pure gold or fine brass; the curtains of the sanctuary were bright with the fairest colours, and inwrought with rich embroidery. The worship of the Temple borrowed from art all that art had of its purest and best; there was fragrant incense and melodious music; all the beauty that ingenuity could devise, or wealth furnish.

But now comes the question, Is the worship of the Tabernacle, or of the Temple, to be a model for the Christian Church? And the answer must be in the negative. The Levitical system was typical and temporary, as truly as were the bleeding sacrifices which formed its most essential part. It has all passed away, together with the shedding of blood. In Old Testament times the Church of God was in her nonage. She was under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the Father. During her childhood state she was conversant with what St. Paul does not hesitate to call "weak and beggarly elements;" and he warns his converts against a return to these, and the hard and fruitless bondage which they engender.

But if the Levitical ritual is not to be our model for Christian worship, may we not go forward, as some plead, to the Apocalyptic vision of St. John, and mould our services after the pattern which the beloved disciple saw in Patmos? And here, again, the answer must be in the negative.

The Book of Revelation is symbolical, its symbols being derived mainly from the Temple service; and it sets forth heavenly things under earthly imagery. It is dangerous to apply these symbols to the worship of the Christian Church; for, to be consistent, we must not make an arbitrary and un-

authorised selection of the figures, but must deal with the whole. Thus, if we find one angel with a golden censer full of incense, and argue from this the duty of offering incense at our services, we find another angel with a censer which he fills with fire off the altar, and casts it on the earth. Is this also to be one of our prescribed rites? Are we to abolish every distinction between the ministers and the people because we find that in heaven the whole number of the redeemed are made "priests unto God?" Are we to do away with houses of prayer because the New Jerusalem is without a temple?

These hints illustrate the difficulties that beset the way of those who maintain that the visions of St. John give us a model for Christian worship. Have we, then, anywhere in the New Testament a definition of true and acceptable worship?

We have; and in the words of our blessed Lord Himself: "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

How is this worship to be secured? Not by any external process. Outward forms cannot create inward spirituality. They may be its expression; they are not its source. The heart is the seat of true worship. Holiness of heart is the gift of the Holy Ghost. Holiness of life is conformity to Christ. Holiness of worship is the outgoing of the soul in prayer and praise to God. But then, when many gather together for united prayer, there must be language which all can agree to use—concurrent confession, adoration, supplication, thanksgiving. I need not say that our English Prayer-book—"this golden censer which was purged from its dross at the time of the Reformation"—provides us with forms of worship, simple and noble, well fitted to bring us in faith, love, and penitence to the mercy-seat of Almighty God. But though true worship allows of forms, as instruments of devotion, the forms must always be of a subordinate and secondary character. They are means to devotion, but cannot of themselves constitute devotion. From being helps they may be easily transformed into hindrances. And this latter they become when they overlay the spiritual life instead of setting it forth; when they are prized for their own sakes, and not simply as a vehicle of approach to God; when they tempt men to stop short with them, instead of pressing through them to Him who will be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Here is our danger. We need a form wherewith to clothe our public devotions; yet such is the deceitfulness of the human heart that the form may, and often does, become the occasion of formality. Did not God once and again cast a slight upon the Temple worship of His own appointment, and

condemn the gifts and sacrifices which Himself had ordained, because the people regarded them not as means, but as ends; not as any avenue of approach, but as barriers between the worshippers and their God?

And, therefore, since even lawful forms are an element of danger to the soul, care must be taken not to multiply them unnecessarily, and so to order them that they may prove to be a blessing, and not a curse. If all the worshippers were spiritually-minded; if, like "the King's daughter," they were "all glorious within," the danger would be little or nothing, and we should rise above all outward forms into spiritual communion with God. And not only so, but we should acknowledge that the mere worship of God was in itself attractive; that it needed nothing external to give it a charm. We should feel like David of old, "A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand:" we should exclaim with the patriarch at Bethel, "This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

But all who worship God in word are not worshippers in spirit; and others there are who find no pleasure in the services of the sanctuary. To them the Sabbath is a weariness, and the words of the Psalmist a satire, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord." And these, I suppose, are the persons chiefly intended when we talk of making our services attractive. The idea is of throwing out some bait, of offering some bribe to the unspiritual, in order to draw them to the worshipping assembly. And so an earthly element is to be introduced into our worship, and the tone is to be lowered, in order to attract the alienated mind.

Now I go all lengths in granting that our services should be attractive, with the attractiveness of warmth, and earnestness, and life. There should be nothing by its slovenliness or coldness to repel, but everything by its fervency and devoutness to win and to please. Nor are we to forget the young of our congregations who are drawn to churches where the services are highly æsthetic. And we should be anxious, moreover, to win the indifferent and the unholy, under the Gospel sound.

But even so, I question the expediency of introducing doubtful attractions, by which you flatter that which is congenial to the natural man, and minister to his self-deception; whilst you hurt the really spiritual mind, and introduce things which are only of the earth, earthy, into a worship which should be holy, and heavenly, and pure. Are we to invite men to the house of prayer, and promise them as a bribe what befits the art-gallery and the concert-room? Is the eye of faith ostensibly to "see Him who is invisible," whilst the eye of sense is going out to the jewelled reredos or the gaudy vestment? Is the ear of faith professedly to hear Him who speaketh from heaven, and yet to

be on the stretch for the concord of sweet sounds? Are not rather our whole feelings in the house of God to be dominated by the thought, "The Lord is in His holy temple: let the whole earth stand in awe of Him?"

Let us consider to what extent music and other æsthetic agencies may be lawfully employed in rendering Divine service attractive, as it is termed, to the masses of the people with whom we have to do.

I lay down one broad general principle. In all the arrangements, whether as regards the place or the service, everything should be made subordinate to intelligent spirituality. A Christian congregation meets for the purpose of uniting in prayer and praise; to receive instruction; to have their minds enlightened, their judgment convinced, their sluggish affections made to stir and throb with life. Whatever promotes these purposes ministers to edification; and with this object nothing must interfere. This does not exclude beauty from the architecture and arrangements of our churches. The places set apart for the worship of God should not be mean, or poor, or squalid. We should not be content that "the ark of God dwell in curtains," while we ourselves "dwell in cedar." The best which any man can bring to God is not too good: the richest is not too rich for Him. Art and song may be as ministering handmaids setting forth the glory of His name. The house built by human hands for Divine worship should be dignified and impressive; for, as we are material as well as spiritual, we must not disdain the aids which external objects may give to the piety of the worshippers. At the same time, let us take care that the whole be in harmony with the pure Christian faith restored to us at the Reformation.

And then as to music in our services. What are the principles that should regulate the song and psalmody of the Church?

To answer this question we must have an intelligent perception of the reason why we sing at all. Is it to satisfy the lovers of artistic taste; or is it that the congregation may give utterance to the united expression of its joy, its thankfulness, its trust, its love, and its praise? God has bestowed upon us the divine gift of music, that through its help emotions which would otherwise yearn in vain for utterance, may find their natural expression. In heaven itself the perfection of praise is expressed in song. Music has always been giving expression to the spiritual life of the Church, from the early time when Pliny heard "hymns sung to Christ as God;" and the great gift of sacred song has ever been employed in the worshipping congregation.

But it is to be remembered that Church music is no mere entertainment for those who have a musical taste; it has a high and proper place in the worship of God, a holy and solemn

function to serve. But let its kind be devotional, not artistic. Anthems and services which, from their difficulty, prevent the general congregation from taking part in them are, to my mind, unsuited for public worship. To stand and listen while a choir performs is but a vicarious worship after all, if it be worship in any sense of the word. All of us know how, when listening to the anthem, with its duet, and solo, and quartet, we have exchanged the attitude of the worshipper for that of the critic, and have found ourselves comparing the different excellence of the treble, the tenor, and the bass. This ought not so to be. A choir is useful to lead and support the multitude of untrained and unprofessional voices: else may the singing degenerate into a medley of discordant sounds. But the province of a choir is to lead the song of a congregation, not to monopolise it. In our service of song, let harmony be subordinate to melody; let the tunes be sweet and simple, such as all can join in with pleasure; let our hymns be expressive of true religious feeling, whether of prayer or praise; let us remember that our whole worship is to be "in spirit and in truth;" and then I think there will be no lack of attractiveness in our service: especially, and most particularly, if to this be added devout praying of the Prayers, good reading of the Lessons, and warm and earnest preaching of the gospel of the grace of God. As to framing our services after such a model as will attract the multitude, and draw them to our churches, I doubt the expediency of such an attempt. Grant that we may attract men and women of the world by elaborate ritual and ceremony, by architectural adornment, and by sensuous music. What have we gained? What have they gained? You have helped to make for them the unwelcome bondage of the Sunday as easy and agreeable as possible. You have enabled them to put on the outward appearance of devotion when there was no inward reality. You have sent them away self-satisfied, because they have mistaken their pleasure in the glory of art and the melody of song for true religion, and have been content to draw nigh to God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him.—

There is no greater danger incident to an elaborate ritual than that of mistaking emotion for religious feeling. The music of soft voices; the pealing tones of the organ; the fragrance of incense; the mellow light streaming in through the painted window, and casting a subdued glow over floor, and pillar, and aisle—these adjuncts may thrill the soul with delight, but they lift it not up to God in true and acceptable worship. Even John Milton, Puritan as he was, felt the power of such things upon the senses:—

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister pale,

And love the high embowered roof,
With antique pillars, massy proof,
And storied windows, richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light ;
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthem clear
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

Alas! feelings so excited have often only to do with the bodily organisation, and may be far removed from spiritual experience.

As to the amount of music to be introduced into our services, this must be governed by the Scriptural law, "Let everything be done to edification." Tastes differ; and if harmony, in another sense, is to prevail in a congregation, the personal preference of a small minority must yield to the desire of a large majority; always supposing that no Scriptural rule or principle is violated in spirit or in practice. These and like matters must be left to the prayerful decision of individual congregations. Only let large-hearted charity prevail, both with minister and people.

In these days of doctrinal tergiversation the laity have reason to be jealous of the clergy; and the clergy have need of great caution in introducing unnecessary changes. But let confidence be deserved on the one side and conceded on the other. Let priestly rule be renounced by the minister, and unworthy suspicion discarded by the people.

While discussing the use of musical and other æsthetic adjuncts of Divine worship, let us not omit the great and more legitimate attraction of a well-enunciated liturgical service. This depends largely on the capacity and deportment, and devotional preparation of the officiating minister. Let the Prayers be solemnly and impressively prayed, not read. Let the Lessons, and other portions of Scripture be intelligently and seriously read, not hurried over, or drawled. Let there be no intoning, or monotoning, or other haziness of human devising: no airing of man's crotchets, no obscuration of God's glory.

And as regards the sermon, let it be to the point, and not wandering; let it be long enough to discuss the subject propounded, not so long as to produce weariness; let it be solid enough to convince the understanding, and fervent enough to warm the heart. Above all, let it be full of Christ and empty of the preacher; and let it be delivered in fervent prayer for, and entire dependence upon, the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

Such a service, in all its parts—prayer, praise, and preaching

—will prove, as I believe, attractive to the great mass of our congregations, when the fopperies of ecclesiastical dress, the mummeries of sacerdotal imposition, and the sensuous attractions of dramatic music, shall have faded into well-deserved oblivion.

Finally, let one and all, whether in the desk, the pulpit, or the pew, endeavour to make the services of the sanctuary as edifying as possible. By the earnestness of our prayers, by the intensity of our praise, by the fervour of our thanksgiving, by the intelligence and spirituality of our "Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs," let all strive to "worship God in spirit and in truth."

Thus, while we worship, shall our souls be filled with joy, and be blessed by the presence of Him "whose we are, and whom we serve." And thus shall we realise the blessed fact that we "dwell in God, and God in us."

CHARLES D. BELL.

ART. VI.—HOSPITALS.

PART I.

OF late years an infinite variety of charities have endeavoured to gain the support of the English public. We may read with pleasure the statements which show that although in this nineteenth century the prosperity and wealth of England have advanced by gigantic strides, we have increased our charitable gifts in a similar ratio, and cheerfully pay a tax of several millions a year to support the good objects around us. But from most of our various societies and institutions having, directly or indirectly, a religious object in view, there are not many which all classes and creeds can agree in forwarding.

Hospitals stand almost alone in being a work of charity of such a Catholic nature that Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, Englishman and Foreigner, Churchman and Nonconformist may assist in the management, and may participate in the bounty.

But the work of eleemosynary healing is done in various ways and by the help of different agencies.

Of these the general hospitals do the great proportion, and are looked upon as the centres of medical skill, and as the institutions where the study of disease may be carried out with every means at hand for the physician or physiologist to investigate the secrets of Nature. The work done by a general hospital is to take under its care all who suffer from disease or accident, so far as its space and means allow, and so long as