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LIGHT FROM AN OLD RUBRIC.

BY THE REV. CHARLES COURTENAY, M.A.

HIDDEN away within the folds of our Prayer Book lies a momentous and startling Rubric. Few seem to know it ; fewer appear to be interested in it ; still fewer are found to use it. And yet, it yields a bright light for these dark times.

We must not be too sanguine in controversial matters. Yet, optimism being the salt of life, I dare hope that even one out-of-the-way Rubric may charm away some of our darker clouds. At any rate, we shall do well to give it a fair consideration, and then hope for the best.

"But it is only a Rubric," some will say.

It is true that, with some, Rubrics have lost much of their old seriousness. We see them bandied about like light shuttlecocks. They have, many of them, fallen into sad disesteem, and are treated as if they were of doubtful validity. Men sift them out, select what they prefer, and ignore the rest.

And yet, they are nearly all we have in the shape of ecclesiastical marching-orders. They are still supposed to be genuine guides in matters of doctrine and devotions. And if such sign-posts are uprooted, how shall sincere souls find their way ? It is safer to respect them, I think. Better, too, to observe them ; because loyalty lies that way, and self-respect, and honesty.

So, I will assume their acceptability, and accept this special Rubric, which is the only one in evidence just now, as valid and binding ; and, most certainly, as reflecting the mind of our Church. Accepting less than this will run us into rebellion, and riot, and chaos.

THE SETTING OF THE RUBRIC.

Our Rubric ushers us into a sick chamber, where a sick man is lying in weakness and distress. The pains of the body are matched, we must suppose, by the pains within, in his spirit. He is on a slope, which may lead anywhere ; and he fears the worst. Do we not all recognize the scene ? And can we not, ourselves, recall his sensations of uncertainty and apprehension ?

Naturally, he would fain get relief of some sort, and fetch, from somewhere, light in his darkness. There must be some remedy for such a need as his. Is there not a Great Physician able to prescribe for such a man as he, and for such a need as his ?

It is suggested to him that there is possible consolation in the Holy Communion ; that a Minister should be called in ; that, what others have found consoling, might also pacify his soul. Ready to snatch at any help, from any source whatever, he assents, and the Minister is duly summoned.

I am warranted, I think, in imagining such a position as this

from the unreadiness and rush which pervades the atmosphere of the case. It is not the case of a ripe old saint, who had often received the Holy Communion before.

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But the situation is less simple than it seemed. Unexpected difficulties arise, simple regulations have been forgotten. So, in spite of the call, and the coming, the Chalice and the Paten must be laid aside.

What hinders ?

As every instructed Churchman knows, the Church is exceedingly jealous concerning her Sacraments, and fearful, lest they be misapplied. And who shall blame her ? "The corruption of the best is the worst," we are often told. Devotions which should be of the greatest help may easily become serious and fatal hindrances. This is the aspect of things presented to us here.

THE CHURCH'S PROHIBITIONS.

We must eliminate from our minds the notion of a fussy Church, insisting on empty formalities, and hard to please. The situation is far more serious than this. Her regulations are tests of fitness, are intended to uncover unrealities, and to probe sincerities. She has clear views as to the fittest recipients, and dares to exclude the unfit and the doubtful. So, if she throws up any barriers here and there, who shall blame her ?

Neither must we be forward to judge her too hastily, as if her conditions were trivial and flimsy, however much they may look like it. Better far that we look below the surface, and try to find the reason of any prohibitions she may make.

We must take heed, too, that we do not yield to that common notion that the Church of England is behind the times ; antiquated, and over rigid. Truth is, after all, no modern finding. The Blessed Sacrament was not instituted yesterday. Fashion and taste never presided over her Creeds. Neither does her machinery show signs of rust or wear. It has answered its purposes for many a long year, and it is somewhat late in the day for objectors to arraign her methods. There has been one great Reformation ; we do not see any need of another.

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But let us see for ourselves what prohibitions she thrusts into the hands of her Ministers. Our Church, we are sure, has never lacked for common sense, and has always been ready to give a reason for the hope that is in her.

1. There will be no controversy over the first of the prohibitions, namely, "the extremity of sickness."

Who among us would venture to present the Sacramental elements to a man in extremity, scarcely conscious, wholly incapable ?

And if a sick man's physical condition forbids either eating or drinking at all, would not this be a bar too ?

Our Church has never lent herself to the view that magical powers

are inherent in the Bread and Wine. Such superstition has always been abhorrent to her.

Neither does she aggrandise one Means of Grace to the detriment of another ; or treat the Holy Communion as if it were a last resort—that or nothing.

2. The second prohibition will meet, I imagine, with much less ready support. Namely, "the want of warning in due time to the Curate."

There is no denying that it presents a somewhat harsh and trivial front. At the first, we are inclined to traverse it as unworthy of a great Church. But remembering her reputation for reasonableness, we are constrained to suspect that there must be something rational beneath it. This, I think, we shall find.

And we are confirmed in this presumption by re-calling the fact that the demand of notice does not stand alone, but has its fellow in the General Communion Service. There, too, the due notice is insisted on. In that Rubric a time is stated : "At least sometime the day before." It is then plain that we must look for the same reason in both.

And the reason is, I imagine, simple enough ; nothing less than the prevention of haste in so solemn a transaction. We all, the most experienced of us, require some little leisure before-hand, if we are to receive our Communion profitably. How much more shall a sick man, perhaps unfamiliar with the Service, make a pause between the intention and the act ?

Moreover, the danger of a panic Communion is not very remote at such a time. The spirit of a drowning man, clutching at a straw, is not the best spirit for a man clamouring for the Communion. For the act of reception is valueless unless it be accompanied by repentance and faith, those spiritual attitudes of the soul which so rarely function in times of fear.

So there are good reasons, after all, for this our second prohibition.

3. But what are we to say concerning the third prohibition ?—"the lack of company to receive with him" ? Where is the reasonableness of this ?

From the fact that a solitary Communion is a violation of its very nature and name. You cannot have a co-union with only one. It is "the company" which makes a Holy Communion possible.

Moreover, to be associated with other Christians in so holy a function makes for strength and reality. It takes off from the strangeness, and the loneliness, of the, perhaps, novel action. Do they not help to preserve the warmth and the life of the Sacrament ?

Besides this, a confession needs witnesses ; and is not this reception of the Sacred Feast a testimony of profession and faith ? A religious act, performed alone, does not imply much ; but, brought out into the open, and done in the sight of men, and you elevate the whole transaction.

We have an instance of this violation of unity in the case of

the Corinthian Christians, who, in their Love Feast, and in their Communion, ate and drank lavishly and selfishly, and ignored their hungry brethren who, in their poverty, were obliged to go hungry away. You will remember the ground on which the Apostle condemned them? Because they did not "discern the Lord's Body," i.e. the Church.

Thus, we see, what a sound foundation there was for this third prohibition, too.

4. There is a fourth prohibition—a general one this time—giving the largest discretion to the Minister, to give, or to withhold, the Sacred Elements.

"Or by any other impediment."

What other impediments can there be? It will not be difficult to answer this question.

Suppose a sick man is grossly ignorant of the purpose and significance of the Lord's Supper. Can he be a worthy Communicant? To such a man the whole service would be one long puzzle.

It is true, ignorance has been glorified, in the past, by those who should have known better. Ignorance has even been declared the "mother of devotion." But no enlightened Church has ever asserted such a preposterous notion, or ever will, knowing full well that ignorance is the mother of superstition only. Such a claim sprang from the Dark Ages, and can only exist where darkness reigns.

It is not possible, then, for such a Church as ours to justify any presentation of the Sacred Elements to irresponsible and unprepared subjects. The Church does not deal in charms; repudiates magic, and insists on some measure of intelligence on the part of a recipient.

Suppose, too, the sick man lacks the disposition of a good Communicant; has neither repentance, nor faith. Should we account him eligible for a penitent's Feast? Not so long as the writ of Christ still runs, and the declared mind of the Church persists. To waive such essentials as faith and repentance would be to play the traitor to the Christian Creed.

Can there be any doubt about it? Read over the full Service of the Holy Communion, and do we not overhear a long moan of compunction and confession? The true Communicant is seen, all the way along, clinging to the skirts of the Saviour, and sheltering under His merits. From beginning to end, he is never allowed to forget the two great twin realities of sin and the Saviour. And how can we, in the face of all this, allow an impenitent, careless, and distrusting man, participate in a Communion of which these are the very basis of fitness?

"But will not," some will say, "the Service of the Holy Communion awaken all these good dispositions in the sick man's heart?"

Shall we do evil that good may come? let us reply. The Lord's Supper was not so intended; let us also reply.

"But, perhaps, he has deeper feelings, and truer thoughts, than we suspect." It may be so. But can we not easily find out?

Charity is an excellent virtue, but we must not let it overreach itself, and land us in perilous places. On such a ground we must throw our Table open to the wide world.

"Well, if it does no good it will do no harm," still others may say.

Let us not be too sure of that. It is easier to harm a soul than some people fancy. What if, by administering the Holy Communion to the wrong subject, we drug his soul into a condition of false hope? Spiritual narcotics are ever noxious, and the sleep they produce is often an eternal one. We may not be privy to this raising of delusive hopes for which there is no true warrant.

So, on this last prohibition also the faithful Minister will use his discretion wisely, and not be afraid to say "No."

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It must be clear to everybody that our whole field of prohibitions is overspread with difficulties and problems. It is certain too that the Minister who is brave and faithful enough to act upon them, is faced with awkward consequences. What can he do to resolve matters?

He can only fall back upon his Church, and say, frankly, that his hands are tied; and that, under the authority of his Church, he must withhold the Communion; at least for a time.

Does this seem a lame and futile conclusion? Well, it does, if it is allowed to stand alone. But, fortunately, our Church has afforded a way of escape. The sick man need not, after all, go empty away.

THE RUBRIC.

"But if a man, either by reason of extremity of sickness . . . do not receive the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, the Curate shall instruct him, that, if he do truly repent him of his sins, and steadfastly believe that Jesus Christ hath suffered death upon the Cross for him, and shed His Blood for his redemption, earnestly remembering the benefits he hath thereby, and giving Him hearty thanks therefore, he doth eat and drink the Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ profitably to his soul's health, although he do not receive the Sacrament with his mouth."

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It is all in order. The Minister, being endowed with a double office and with a double qualification, should he be debarred from one can fall back upon the other. For is he not a minister of the Word as well as the Sacraments?

Thus we see that, if the Rubric ties the Minister's hands in one direction, it unties them in the other.

It explains, too, the Church's rigidity in exercising her prohibitions; for, has she not, kept in reserve, a way of escape? Her seeming cruelty is amply matched by her real charity. If she closes one door, she opens another just as good.

What a flood of light this concession throws upon the liberality and common sense of our Church! There is nothing narrow or

restricted about her methods. In the best sense, she faces every lawful way, and deals with every situation bravely and sanely. If she raises some barriers she is careful to lower others.

Neither is she over cautious, wincing at possible misapprehensions and dangers. At the same time, she is never reckless. With sure step she moves serenely along her appointed way, and, if she takes risks, takes them wisely and soundly.

SOME IMPLICATIONS.

Let us now see how far this Rubric commits our Church ; and what reasonable inferences we may draw from it.

It is possible, then, to receive, under special circumstances, a valid Communion, in the absence of consecrated Bread and Wine. And it is possible to do this without any suspicion of inferiority or incompleteness. So long as we keep within the ring-fence of necessity, no sick man need worry about the inadequacy of such a Communion. It is, in every way, a true Communion.

And, just as the natural accompaniments of the Holy Sacrament are dropped, so also is any intermediary Priest. Looming somewhat largely in the Public Celebrations of the Holy Communion, he here subsides into comparative insignificance. From being perhaps too much in evidence, he ceases necessarily to be in evidence at all. So far, however, as the Minister is a man of spiritual experience, he still has his place to fill in the Ministry of the Word.

Our Rubric also implies that the inner is of larger significance than the outer ; the Spirit above the Form. Indeed the Form being, in this case, denied, only the Spirit remains.

It is implied, moreover, that what is so essential in the sick-room, and for the sick man, is no less essential in Church. If spirit is the vital element in one, it must also be the vital element in the other. The Bread and Wine in his case were *not* vital matters ; are they any more vital in the public ministration ? That priests declare them so, is clear enough. But have they any warrant for it ? Is it allowable to shift the emphasis in either ?

Neither is it doing dishonour to the Blessed Sacrament to treat the Symbol so, and to look beyond it. Is it not the fate of all symbols to be used, and then ignored ? They are, indeed, stepping-stones to higher truths ; but who lingers over a stepping-stone ? To stay at the Symbol is to miscarry fatally.

In the face of such implications as these, how foolish to quarrel over the mysteries of the Holy Communion, over Objective or Subjective, or over the Real Presence—so long as Christ the Lord be inwardly received.

Do we not all agree that the final destination of the Christ is the human spirit, and that only by feeding on Him can we make a good Communion ? Why then stay midway ? Why linger over the pathway ? Why not feed on Him " by faith with thanksgiving " ? This is the sick man's way ; and, as have been taught, his Communion is real and true.

And why make comparisons between the Divine Means of

Grace? Why initiate a conflict between the Word and Sacrament? To call one the principal, and to treat the other as inferior, is as puerile as it is false. Each has its place. Both emanate from the Lord of Life. Both, in their own sphere, are supreme. Do they not, like beneficent trains, travel in the same direction, on parallel lines? To call one an Express and the other a Parliamentary, when both are equally sure and well furnished, is a pastime for small, not large minds.

Certainly in our sick-room we see no such conflict. The Word was as effective in its place as the Consecrated Elements. Denied the one, the other naturally takes its place, and becomes in effect the same thing.

PRECEDENTS.

There may be, in some scrupulous minds, a suspicion that, in our Rubric, our Church is not playing a fair game; and, that she is, in fact, a little irregular. With such a doubt in our minds, we must needs be uneasy. No one likes to be planted on unfamiliar ground, or to be privy to a break with the past. But if we can be shown that our Church is on the ancient lines, and in the true order, we are all the more ready to accept her Rubric.

We need not be afraid. All is in strict order. She is *not* violating precedent.

The appeal to St. Augustine is always satisfactory, for he holds the unfeigned respect and admiration of all Christians, past and present. And this is what St. Augustine assures us concerning this Spiritual Communion:

“Believe, and thou hast eaten.”

Is not this assertion a repetition of the Rubric we are considering?

We may quote, too, an ancient Liturgy; one which had a large voice in the construction of our own Prayer Book. This is the position of the Sarum Liturgy on this spiritual reception:

“Brother, in this case your true faith and good will sufficeth.”

The ancient sick man is no otherwise treated than our modern one.

The very Schoolmen are found asserting the same consoling truth. St. Thomas Aquinas assures us, that:

“There are two ways of eating: one sacramentally, and the other spiritually. An effective Sacrament is made when a man is spiritually conjoined to Christ.”

Our Church, then, has not broken away from the past, or perpetrated some new thing, when she inserted our Rubric into her Prayer Book. So far as the past was in error she broke with it; but so far as the past findings were Christian and Scriptural, she steadily adhered to them all.

SOME EXTENSIONS OF OUR RUBRIC.

How far is this Rubric of ours of general application? Now that it has emerged, are we to bury it quickly out of sight again?

Why should we? We shall do better to give it as large an application as it will reasonably bear.

But only in analogous cases, where similar conditions are found. In such conditions the principle may be applied vigorously.

The problem before us, then, is:—Supposing we can find needs so great and so pressing as that sick-room revealed, how far may this provision for a spiritual Communion be justifiably used?

A man in banishment, for instance, cut off from every Means of Grace, may honestly fall back upon this provision, may he not?

We can imagine St. John in Patmos taking refuge in this spiritual way of escape from lack of outside helps. And was not this precisely what he did when he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day," and "saw Jesus," and was touched by His pierced Hand? There can be no starvation for any such man who has learned the secret of spiritual Communion. Nor is there for the solitary soul who, in spirit, remains true and faithful, and who leans back upon the unseen bosom of Jesus, for company, and for solace.

There are spiritual banishments, too, no less distressing, when Christian souls are physically remote from the Public Means of Grace. There are wilds even in old England, where the chances of Communion are few and difficult, and where a Minister can only find his way infrequently. In the Canadian wilds, such a lack must be commoner still.

What can such men do in their isolation but lift their own barriers, and commune with their Lord by acts of personal faith and devotion? They may not be physically sick, but they are suffering from a malady worse than sickness. They may well then claim the Rubric consolations for themselves, and apply them.

May we not apply our principle to desert parishes, too? I know it is the proud boast of the Church of England that nobody in the land is beyond the ministrations of her clergy; and, geographically it is true, more or less. But what if the ministrations are not acceptable, and are repellent to the true and simple Christian? It is no good dubbing them straitlaced and narrow; no good declaring that they ought to get used to such new ways and new doctrines. In many cases it cannot be done except at the cost of principle and honesty. Besides, the ritual extravagances, perpetrated in many parish churches, are illegal, unauthorized by any law of the Church. So what can we expect but that many earnest Christians will be shocked by ritual changes and their doctrinal implications, and be driven away? Are not such men as much cut off from their Lord's Table as if they were living in desert wilds?

I suggest that, for such, our Rubric provides clear satisfaction. If man has scattered them, may we not expect the Blessed Lord to gather them again by His own ministrations, and by His direct blessing? Let them, then, hold spiritual Communion with their Saviour, and embrace afresh those holy promises which are their life's mainstay. Let them, in their privation, hold up the Cross of the Redeemer, and, by faith, clasp it to their hearts. Repenting

again, and believing again, they shall find Him blessing them again, and filling them with all the benefits of His passion.

To those who disagree with this application, and who, it may be, are the authors of the whole confusion, we can only say "Find a better way." Imagine a Saviour who will not welcome His banished ones, and accept this spiritual Communion so valid and so justified.

SOME PATENT PERILS.

We are well aware that not everybody can be trusted with so spiritual a method. Some will most surely misapply it. So much the more reason then to dissociate ourselves from such perils, and to point out the dangers attending it.

A few plain considerations will set the matter on a right footing.

In the first place, we cannot formulate a rule out of an exception; a general rule out of a particular remedy. If you are a sick man, unable to participate, in a palpable state of unreadiness, or, ignorant of the very elements of the Sacrament, then you may be the exception, and require the Gospel rather than the Sacrament of the Gospel.

As it happens, we have illustrations of this very violation of a plain command in two great Christian Bodies, both of whom reject the Holy Sacrament as binding in any literal sense.

The Quakers, for instance, have raised the spiritual idea into a system, and assert that the spiritual aspect of the Lord's Supper is the only admissible one. It would be wrong to say that they deny the necessity of the Lord's Supper. They accept the Ordinance, and believe that, in their spiritual way, they are obeying the command of their Master. To their own Master they stand or fall. But, for ourselves, and as a Church, we have no such misgivings concerning the duty of a literal reception, and only in one particular do we follow them, namely, where our Rubric leads. The Quakers stand, rather, as beacons of warning, to show us the danger of unduly pressing the spiritual and so deviating from the general mind of all other Churches.

The Salvation Army have also tabooed the Holy Sacrament; but for a different reason. Conflicts over the Sacrament have produced such a sense of repugnance in them that they fear to admit into their body so disruptive an influence. We do not agree with them; and it seems to us cowardly thus to shelve the matter. But probably they do not consider their Army as a Church at all.

The peril, then, is real enough, and we do well to emphasize it. At the same time a remedy is found in the very statement of the danger. The danger, however, is found, not in the spirituality of the Holy Communion, but in the ultra-spirituality which denies the letter in the supposed interests of the spirit. So long as we are in the flesh, with our feet on the material earth, we can hardly expect to be independent of the latter. We are rather driven to use the material as a foundation on which to raise the spiritual structure. Because some foolishly make a God of the material, there is no reason why we should not make a stepping-stone of it.

We may not then wisely, or Christianly, convert a particular Rubric into a general rule, making it applicable to the whole of life, public and private.

A similar temptation was seen assailing our soldiers during the late campaign. The commissariat issued to them emergency rations, necessary when supplies, through the exigencies of war, were lacking. It was, however, against military regulations to consume them at other times. That was an indictable offence, and was severely punished. This is just what our Rubric was intended to be, an emergency ration only.

As well might the population, for whom Emergency Shelters were provided, during the Zeppelin raids, use them at all other times. They were not so intended, any more than our Rubric was intended for every-day use either.

The truth is, human nature has vagrant tendencies, too ready to swerve from the orthodox and prescribed; and nowhere are these tendencies so markedly present as in the spiritual spheres of life. It is this tendency which impels men to imagine emergencies, and also to multiply them. It stimulates, too, that spirit of independence which kicks against authority, and insists on going its own way.

And when you add the lazy propensities of some Christian men, you have an amalgam which is fatal. Anything to save fuss and worry, and to make one self-sufficient is their more favourite maxim.

Only, let us remember, that perils do not militate against the proper use of our Rubric. They only warn us to be on our guard against its abuse. That stands, peril, or no.

OUR RUBRIC AS AN ACT OF RELIEF.

There is still another rôle which the Rubric can play; it can minister help to the clergy themselves. They may, or may not, make use of it; but, whether they do or not, it is there for their deliverance when the need becomes acute. We all need extrication sometimes.

For instance, have we not all, at some time or another, been attacked by fears concerning the fitness of some for the Holy Communion? This hesitation is not only natural but praiseworthy; for we cannot but share the apprehensions of our Church concerning the danger of unworthy partaking. Perhaps, among some, there is too little apprehension. The modern tendency to admit all and sundry, and to ask few, if any, questions, is a bad sign of the times.

Supposing, then, we find ourselves in grave doubt concerning a would-be communicant, or, it may be, a Confirmee, shall we admit them or not? If not, what shall we do? Well, there is our Rubrical way; why not fall back upon that way? Ply them with the Word of Life; press the claims of Christ upon them; deliver to them the Gospel with all plainness and simplicity. More than probably, by adopting this method of our Church, we shall see the unreadiness resolved into the best of ripeness for the Holy Communion itself in its public form. For the Gospel is more than a substitute; it

is also a preparation for that larger confession at the Table of the Lord.

Concerning the merits, or demerits, of Fasting Communion, I do not profess here an opinion. I only know that some scrupulous clergymen more than hesitate to communicate after a meal. For the same reason they would prefer not to administer to others unless fasting.

Most of us will see no dishonour to Christ in such a Communion and at such a time; but scruples are too tender growths to be trampled on. And so we say to such: why not accept the relief given in the Rubric? If you cannot administer the Holy Elements, then give them the Word of the Gospel. I do not know whether this would be a fair application of the Rubric which refers only to the sick man who is unready; unless he admits himself to be a sick man who requires the concession. It will not stretch the terms of the Rubric overmuch.

Then there is afforded here a real relief in times, and cases, of urgency.

A life is passing; and the call is insistent for a Minister's presence and help. Moments are precious, and the time is short. But there is nearly always time for a whispered message of Christ, and the telling of the old, old story, even when there is hardly time for the ordered service. Neither will the Reservation of the Communion facilitate matters much, if at all. Besides, it must be noted that it was for such cases as these that our Rubric was provided; to relieve doubt, and to meet an emergency.

And if any deny that the spoken Word is as salutary as the Blessed Sacrament with its material accompaniments, and that the reception of the heart is altogether different from the eating and drinking with the mouth; then we can only say: "Then you are at issue with your own Church, which declares that one, as well as the other, are both a feeding upon Christ effectually."

If, however, we decline to enter the Church's harbour of refuge, nothing more can be said.

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Such is our Rubric; and such, I think, is a fair interpretation of it.

I have tried to play the game, and to play it fairly. If I have offended, it has been done unwittingly. Religion is no sphere in which to snatch unfair victories; and I have no wish to do so.

But, whatever be the true interpretation, the voice of our Church is not uncertain; and the Rubric utters it clearly. The kernel is more than the shell, and the rind of less importance than the fruit. And, so true is this, that, when occasion demands it, we may rightly dispense with the shell altogether. There is no confusion in her mind about the relationship between letter and spirit, nor is there any tendency to incorporate them into one indissoluble unity.

At the same time, no slight is ever attached to the symbol, as if it is only formal and unmeaning. Christ has brought them together, and no man can lightly sunder them. But, if there be

a need, then the symbol may be intermitted without loss. Bridges have their important use, and no sane man will disregard them; but, if they are broken down, then it is legitimate to cross some other way. The sick man, for instance, crosses along the highway of faith.

Is it too much to expect that around this solid core men may be reunited; and that, on this ground, as in a sanctuary, we may live together in peace? To thus concentrate upon essentials, is to call in the scattered from the outskirts to the centre. There we may drop our battle-cries, and clasp hands in true unity. What we gain by fighting we lose in spirituality. It is only in the region of the Spirit that discordancies disappear.

Two more volumes in "The Study Bible," published by Messrs. Cassell & Co. (3s. 6d. net each), are *St. Matthew*, by the Bishop of Ripon and J. A. Findlay, M.A., Professor of Didsbury College, Manchester; and *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, by Professor Hector Maclean, of Ormond College, Melbourne, Professor W. A. L. Elmsie, D.D., of Westminster College, Cambridge, Professor D. Russell Scott, Ph.D., of the Congregational College, Edinburgh, and Professor H. Ranslow, Litt.D., of the Methodist College, Auckland, New Zealand.

The plan of these little commentaries is original. First an appreciation of the Book dealt with is given, then a series of quotations from well-known writers of various ages on consecutive passages, and finally an analysis. On *St. Matthew* the Bishop of Ripon writes an Introduction, "The Gospels: Why Four?" The selection of notes is excellently made by the General Editor, Mr. John Sterling, and include selections from the writings of Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustus, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas à Kempis, Luther, Jeremy Taylor, William Law, Hooker and Stanley, Newman and Keble. Mr. Findlay's analysis of the Gospel brings out its characteristic features.

The Old Testament books in the second volume lend themselves to this special method of treatment, and the authors, who are all specialists in their various departments, have done their work excellently. These are small handbooks, but they provide a most useful selection of material for private study, for devotional use, or for teachers and preachers in their work of preparation.

The Life of Helen Hanson, by E. Louis Acres, with a Foreword by Lady Barrett, C.B.E., M.D., and an Introduction by the Dean of Peterborough (H. R. Allenson, Ltd., 2s. 6d.), is the record of a career of singular earnestness and attractiveness, and of service as a Missionary Doctor in India and during the war.