

Hymns That Were Misfits

CHUCKLES CAUSED BY ILL-TIMED CHOICES.

A preacher had just delivered a fervent address on social problems of the time, and in the course of it had denounced whiskey, beer, wine, and all other intoxicating drinks in unmeasured language. "If I had my way," he said, "I would have them all poured into the river."

The impression he produced on his hearers was rather spoiled when he announced the closing hymn, which had been chosen by the choir-master. It was "Shall we gather at the river?"

A popular hymn in the United States at present, at any rate among those opposed to prohibition, contains the lines:—

The waters of the earth have failed,
And I am thirsty still.

Unconscious Humour.

One of the hymns chosen for a certain Sunday-school anniversary day, when all the girls wear new and dainty costumes and flowery hats, and all the boys and young men appear in stiff collars and tight suits, was "The strain upstairs."

In an unimpaired moment, the minister suggested that the boys and girls should sing the verses alternately. Thus it happened that the girls and their pretty teachers sang: "First let the birds with painted plumage gay," to which came the roaring response: "Then let the beasts of earth, with varying strain," and so on. The best of it was that no one seemed to see the humour of the situation.

On another occasion, the superintendent of the same school, a mild and benevolent-looking man with a long white beard, headed the procession as he filed into the church just as the choir sang: "See the mighty host advancing, Satan leading on."

A Bride's Strange Wish.

One of the heroic padres who won the respect of the troops during the war was holding an impromptu service behind the lines, the men having built him a temporary platform or rostrum out of material lying handy. When the padre announced "The church's one foundation" as the opening hymn, his congregation went into a fit of laughter, pointing helplessly to the words which appeared on the biggest case, which formed a sort of keystone to the rostrum on which the padre stood. No one had thought of hiding the bold inscription:—

Whisky, Born 1820. Still going strong.

The misdeed of a certain clergyman, when asked what hymn should be sung for his wedding, chose without hesitation one which begins:—

I know not what awaits me,
God kindly veils my eyes.
But perhaps the climax was reached at a certain harvest festival celebration, when the hymn chosen began: "Lord, what a wretched land is this."

Something Wrong Somewhere.

The height of inappropriateness is sometimes reached when hymns are translated into rather barbarous tongues by missionaries. For some time a Congolese congregation had sung what the missionaries believed to be the equivalent of "Go labour on, spend and be spent," but which, as they found later, meant to the singers: "Go, blunder on."

After encouraging natives to join feverently in the singing of "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing," a missionary was dismayed to find that for months they had been singing: "Lord, kick us out softly."

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Considerable resentment is expressed against the decree in Rome, and a similar declaration made by the Archbishop of Clermont, France, has aroused much feeling in France.

The development is not a new one, however. The writer remembers seeing a notice in terms almost identical to the Pope's decree on the pillar of one of the most famous churches in Belgium two years ago. In the same church was another notice curiously reminiscent of the trans and buses of our own country: "It is strictly forbidden to spit in the church!"

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