

Our Contributors

Presbyterian Church Music.

INNOVATIONS WHICH ARE BEING INTRODUCED IN THESE MODERN DAYS.
BY A PRESBYTERIAN.

The following story, which appeared lately in the *Scottish American Journal*, may be a little over drawn but it is nevertheless well fitted to "point a moral" for those who are intent upon introducing innovations of doubtful propriety into Presbyterian churches in the shape of classical music, so-called, warbled forth in quartettes, duets and solos, the people meanwhile being obliged to maintain silence notwithstanding the Scriptural injunction, "Let all the people praise Thee, O Lord." The story reads thus: "An old Scotch woman came to this country to make her home with a married daughter, who lived out West in a town of considerable importance. This old Scotch body had had a very fine voice in her youth, and was looked upon as one of the best singers in the congregation of the church at Eastersiles, her native village in Scotland. When she arrived at her new home in America one of the first questions she asked her daughter was the location of the manse, that she might call on the minister with her 'lines' from good Mr. McDuff, her home minister. She soon made her call, and on her return said to her daughter: "Ay, ay, yon's a grand kirk, an' ye hae a braw minister, an' I hae nae doot but ye hae fine singing?" "Oh I yes," answered the daughter (glad to know that her mother was pleased with the minister and the church), "and we have the best music in the city—we have a fine quartette." "Well," said the mother, "I dinna ken muckle aboot quartettes, but I think I'll sing the Psalms o' David wi' the best o' them." And so the old lady went to church on the following Sunday with her new plaid shawl on, her psalm-book wrapped up in her white handkerchief, and carrying her head as high as one of the bens of her native land. The congregation of the church in question was very proud of the choir, which they thought was the finest west of New York, and they were much surprised to hear a loud and very shrill voice taking part in every selection of the music sung by the choir, be it quartette, duet, solo, or congregational singing, and soon the new plaid shawl, or the old woman wearing it, was the observed of all observers.

After the service the organist and the singers complained to the minister, and asked him to tell the unwelcome singer that she spoiled the music by joining in when they were singing concerted music. The minister was reluctant to do so, for he knew how much pleasure some old church members take in joining in the singing at the church service. However, he promised to speak when he called on her and her daughter, which he did in a few days. The mother and daughter were both present when the minister called, the daughter doing most of the talking, while the mother sat quietly. At last the minister asked her how she liked the music at the church. "Well, I'll no' say I didna like it, but it was like the singing at hame, where a' the congregation joined in singing the praises o' the Lord on the Sabbath Day." "But, you see, in this country they sing quartettes, duets and solos, which they call concerted

music, as well as congregational singing," said the good man trying to explain the best he could. "Ay," said the old woman with a smile of contempt, "I thought it was more like a concert than the Lord's house on the Sabbath Day." "Still it is good," pleaded the servant of the Lord, "to have singing by the congregation and singing by the choir alone, and when you join in a quartette you make a discord." This was coming to the point the minister thought. "What's that ye say?" the speaker's ire and voice rising so that it might be heard on the sidewalk. "What's that ye say? Me make discord in the Lord's house on the Sabbath Day! Did ye ever hear the likes o' that? Me, wha hae sung the praises o' the Lord for the last five and forty years, and was considered the best singer in the whole parish of Eastersiles." "But, my dear madam," said the much astonished minister, trying to get a word in, "You don't understand." "No, sir, I'm thankful to say I don't understand, and I can't understand how any minister of God can make an excuse for turning the Lord's house into an opera house on the Lord's Day." "My dear good woman you make a mistake. There is a great difference in the music of a small country village and a large city." "Ye are richt, sir; ye may well say that, and I'm thinking that the music is no' the only thing that's different if I understand onything about the true worship o' God Almighty; and if ye will take the advice o' an old Scotch woman ye'll gie up yer quartettes, duets and concert music, an' a' yer new fangled notions, for if I'm to gie up the lessons o' my youth to follow grand music and braw ministers, I'll gae back to Auld Scotland, where I can sing the Psalms o' David till the day it's His will to ca' me hame; and above a' I'd advise ye to study what Robert Burns says in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' and learn how they worship God in Scotland—where

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts—by far the noblest aim.
Perhaps "Dundee's" wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive "Martyr's" (worthy of the name),
Or noble "Elgin" beats the heavenward flame—
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tick'd ears no heart-felt raptures raise,
Nae unison ha'e they with our Creator's praise.

"Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride
In all the pomp of method and of arts,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's every grace, except the heart!
The Pow'r, invens'd, the pageant will desert
The pompous strain the sacerdotal stole;
But haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His book of life the inmates poor enrol."

Having recited these two stanzas with a dignity, emphasis and expression that would have become a prophetic of old, she flounced out of the room, leaving her much annoyed daughter, and still more astonished minister, to console each other.

In Presbyterian churches, especially in the cities and larger towns, there appears to be a growing craze nowadays for so-called classical music, monopolized by the choir or by select members of the choir in quartettes, duets or solos. Are we not getting away from Presbyterian simplicity of worship in our eagerness to ape the sensuous musical display which is a distinctive characteristic of Roman Catholic and High Anglican churches? It is admitted that church music should be the best a congregation can produce, but it should be congregational music—

"Let all the people praise Thee. The duty of the choir is to lead, not to monopolize church music. Music by the choir only or by select members of the choir, is not worship in the true sense of the term; it is simply a display of the musical capabilities of the choir, entirely out of keeping with the sacredness of worship in the sanctuary on the Lord's Day, though quite in keeping with the social congregational gathering or the missionary rally or the Sabbath school entertainment.

It will be admitted, of course, that the singing of an appropriate piece of sacred music by the choir, while the congregational offering is being taken up, may serve a useful purpose in keeping the attention of the worshippers; but beyond this there does not appear to be any justification for the choir concert exhibition of classical music at any time during public worship, especially when the classical music, as often happens, is so rendered that not more than one word in ten can be understood by the patiently listening congregation.

Another thing that may be noted in some Presbyterian churches is the display of organ music by the organist when the congregation is retiring at the close of the service, in nine cases out of ten entirely out of keeping with the solemn character of public worship and well fitted to dissipate any serious impressions that may have been made by the sermon. A rattling, crashing piece of organ music, of the "march" order, is a most unfitting finale to public worship services.

According to the directory of public worship, the musical service of the congregation is supposed to be under the supervision of the moderator and session. Nowadays, in many congregations, moderators and sessions seem to have handed over their authority to organists and choir leaders, who pay more attention to displaying the musical "paces" of their choirs and solo singers, than of promoting the solemnity of public worship.

All this is seriously out of keeping with the simplicity and impressiveness which have in the past been distinguishing features of public worship in Presbyterian churches. The time seems to have arrived when moderators and sessions of congregations should hold the choir reins with a firmer hand, and the higher church courts take cognizance of the innovations which are being introduced into Presbyterian church music.

Mormons Again Preach Polygamy.

A despatch to the New York *Sun* announces the spread of the propaganda of polygamy by Mormon missionaries in Nebraska, Kansas, and South Dakota. Formerly the missionaries were content simply to proselyte for their faith. They were careful in order to overcome in part at least the antipathy to anything Mormon, to insist that the Church had been reorganized and that polygamy was no longer one of its cardinal doctrines.

The campaign now being prosecuted is a masked one. It is no longer insisted on that polygamy has been banished from the Church. In a covert way it is stated that they are now seeking converts to the Church because polygamy is possible in Utah and Idaho, where the Mormons are the dominant power in politics. One of these missionaries is quoted as having said recently that the true Mormons have