

"ABOUT CHURCH MUSIC."

BY SPERO MELIORA.

It is needless to insist upon so palpable a truth as that there is a place, and no unimportant place either, for vocal music, in the services of the sanctuary. This has been proved by the practice of all Christian assemblies of every denominational shade of opinions, through all ages of the world. The simple hymn sung by an open air audience and the artistic choral service of the Romish Church alike bear practical testimony to this fact. Yet, notwithstanding that music is a natural mode for expressing the emotions of the heart, and the almost universal acknowledgment of its claims, can we say that it really occupies its proper place in the services of the Congregational Churches? Surely not. While it is everywhere admitted that the congregation ought to sing, and it is even urged by many that it is a positive duty as well as a privilege to join in the "service of song in the house of the Lord," how general is the complaint that the people will not sing.

After years of apathetic indifference there seems to be a "revival wave" in this matter passing over the world, to judge from the letters and articles appearing with such frequency in the religious and secular periodicals and journals, even the "Times" having recently opened its columns and published leading articles upon this very subject of "Music in the Church Service."

With these few opening remarks, we may leave the subject of the importance of vocal music in the services of the sanctuary as an admitted fact, requiring no further argument to establish it, and turn our attention to the other questions which grow out of it and which are more or less fully dealt with by every writer on the subject. That our congregations, as a whole, do not sing, is a lamented fact, and if an efficient remedy is to be provided, the cause must be sought out. Several reasons are given why people keep their mouths shut instead of praising God with the voice, but most of these deserve no better name than *excuses*. They have "no voice." Let one of these afflicted individuals without vocal power to join in a hymn of thanksgiving, sing as many of them do, some of the popular songs of the day and then tell them they have "no voice" and had better refrain from any attempts in the future. Would they feel gratified by the criticism? Yet this is the excuse for silence in the Lord's house.

But far more valid reason with many, lies in the fact that they have "no ear." Many a one who likes listening to music, declares that he does not know the difference between the "Old Hundredth" and "God save the Queen." Yet, with a little careful training and a persevering effort on their own part, numbers of these would, to their own surprise maybe, find themselves taking at least a passable part in the song of praise, for after all, it will be found in the large majority of cases that disinclination to trouble lies at the root of the whole matter.

The secret of really good congregational singing is for the congregation to have a tune-book and the ability to read it. And here comes the trouble, not to find a suitable book, for there are many, but to get the people to use it. They "can't be bothered" to learn, and while other minor influences may be at work, want of interest is the great obstacle, awaken that and the key to the whole position is secured.

Now for a word about the troubles of learning. There is not a shadow of doubt that for getting a number of people up to a certain stage of proficiency in reading, within a given time, there is no system equal to the Tonic Sol-fa. With this method, the tune-book may be almost immediately brought into general use in the church. Take an instance of what has actually been accomplished. A minister issued a printed appeal to all his congregation touching this matter of psalmody, coupled with an invitation to form a congregational class, meeting every Monday evening during the winter. The entrance fee was fixed at sixpence (twelve cents), to defray expenses of gas and coals. "The Bristol Tune Book," in the Tonic Sol-fa notation was adopted and the minister took the teach-

ing into his own hands. Most of the congregation came forward at the beginning of the course, many, as usual, fell away after a time, but at least two-thirds of the entire congregation persevered. After a very few lessons the book began to be used in the church. In the course of the first season enough tunes were known for general use in the services, and could be sung from the printed harmonies, while a large proportion of the students could read new tunes having easy transitions, at sight, without disgracing themselves, so that the singing in the regular services was a real, living power, instead of an idle perfunctory performance or duty which had to be got through *somehow*. The second season chanting was taken up with a like result, and the third winter Congregational anthems were introduced: this is an instance from the writer's own knowledge.

Take another example related by the Rev. J. T. Feaston, who is known to many in Canada: "A chapel was built in a poor part of a town in Suffolk. It was opened in the spring of the year. About six months after the opening, a course of psalmody exercises was commenced in the chapel, and the people were exhorted to attend them. They did so, and large numbers came and learned to sing by note and in parts. A competent teacher was engaged to conduct these meetings, and great was the enjoyment they occasioned. About six months after the commencement of this psalmody course, one of the newspapers published in the town contained a long editorial description of the chapel and its arrangements. In this article was the following paragraph, referring to the service of the preceding Sabbath: 'In one respect the service was far more enjoyable to our mind than any other in the town. The singing was unaided by any instrument or choir, but was taken up by all with a perfection of time and tune-keeping, with a fullness of harmony, and a power of expression, which was enough to disturb the peace of mind of an organist for months to come.' This was written just a year after the opening of the place, and the gathering of a congregation, and that in a low and neglected part of the town; and yet * * * we read of the difficulty or impossibility of getting congregations to sing by note and in parts."

(To be continued.)

THE LABRADOR MISSION.

Letters from the above mission have just been received. In the first, dated "Esquimaux River, 6th Jan., '79," Rev. Mr. Butler writes: "The weather has been so very mild that the bays have not frozen over at all, and along the coast one can go about just as in summer. Our river has been partly frozen, but is now almost clear again. Hardly any one here can remember such a season. We have had one or two 'cold snaps,' and the mercury once reached ten degrees below zero. The past two weeks have been very mild, and some days perfectly beautiful. But little snow has fallen either, and it now looks as though we should have a very open winter. Miss Hampton has been quite well; I, better than I feared. The settlement is larger than it has been for a number of years, and the new-comers have occasioned us much trouble and anxiety—many of them being very lawless and unpleasant characters to have about. From this cause some disturbances have taken place, and the state of things spiritually is far from what it was two years ago. From the commencement of coming to the river I noticed a difference, and as weeks went on, evils were continually manifesting themselves, which have caused us a good deal of sorrow. Our own people—church members—have, most of them, kept aloof, but others of whom we hoped better things have been influenced more or less. This evening we commenced our meetings of the 'Week of prayer.' The little school room was well filled. We have had some good meetings this winter—some very still and solemn ones. The truth may be taking a deeper hold than I supposed, but as yet the atmosphere is one of indifference and worldliness."

"28th Jan. The weather has been colder the past two weeks, and travelling is at last practicable. I was out at Bonne Esperance on Friday, and on Saturday

Mr. Whiteley came in to hold a conference with heads of the families on the need of better regulations and more orderly conduct. I trust his talk will do good. He said they all seemed to wish to have things more satisfactory and harmonious, but wanted someone to tell them how. The mail carrier is expected soon. I intend writing for some boards to commence the new chapel at Bonne Esperance, the foundation of which was laid last fall."

Miss Hampton also writes of the winter as being a very mild one, and "passing quickly." She says:—"The time is drawing near when I shall have to part from my scholars, whom I love dearly. Some of them encourage me by their progress; some improve slowly; but I think they all love to come to school. Many have to come without breakfast. They often speak of Miss Warriner, and of her expected return, and are all eager to write letters and send good wishes to her. Our Women's Prayer-meetings are held on Wednesday afternoons, from four to five o'clock, and on Sunday evenings, at half-past six. They have been well attended. Three families have been added to our number this winter: although they formerly belonged to the settlement they have not been directly under the influences of the mission for some years. With many discouragements around us, we know that God's word will not fail, and are cheered by the knowledge that He can make even 'the crooked things' straight. In December, Mrs. Chevalier died, leaving five young children—one, an infant, a few days old. With this exception, there has been no serious illness among the people."

In connection with the foregoing extracts, the readers of the INDEPENDENT and others are reminded that Miss Warriner expects to return to Labrador this Spring. An opportunity will then be given to those interested in the mission, of sending Sunday school papers, magazines, etc. Small books, suitable for prizes, little gifts for the Christmas tree, etc., would also be most acceptable and welcome. These should be addressed: "For Labrador Mission," and sent, as is most convenient, either to Mrs. Toller, 276 Jarvis Street, Toronto, or to Mrs. Wilkes, 249 Mountain St., Montreal, P. Q., before 20th May.

E. TOLLER, Secretary Labrador Mission.

Received for Labrador Mission, from friends at Embro, per Miss Large, \$10.00.

Toronto, 10th April.

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF OLD AGE.

There is a dignity in age which should command respect. The inspired Book says, "The hoary head is a crown of glory," and yet old age is often spoken of slightly, and treated disrespectfully. This is greatly to be deplored, both because the younger folk lose so much of the benefit which they might receive from the varied experiences of those who have preceded them in the painful and dangerous journey of life, and because the elder ones are deprived of the sweet companionship of those who could, if they would, do so much to brighten their waning years.

There is no more harmonious, helpful friendship, than when the old and young walk together in loving confidence. True, the younger must be patient with the infirmities and conservatism of age, as it, in turn, needs to be tolerant with the impetuosity and enthusiasm of youth.

We cannot help thinking that in many instances, elderly people are themselves to blame for much of the indifference which is shown to them, and to which they are naturally so sensitive; inasmuch as they often withdraw into themselves, and do not accord to those who are coming on after them, and who are undergoing experiences like their own, that generous sympathy and consideration which would draw them closer together. Who should be so sympathizing in times of sorrow as those who have known trouble and suffered grief? Who so fitted to understand the peculiarities of childhood, to have patience with the waywardness and stormy sports of youth, to listen kindly and wisely to the confidences of shy lovers, or to advise with, and assist in mapping out the future of the young couple just starting in their new life, as those who having