

Pastor and People.

A SERMON IN RHYME.

If you have a friend worth loving,
Love him. Yes, and let him know
That you love him, ere life's evening
Tinge his brow with sunset glow.
Why should good words ne'er be said
Of a friend till he is dead?

If you hear a song that thrills you,
Sung by any child of song,
Praise it. Do not let the singer
Wait deserved praises long.
Why should one who thrills your heart
Lack the joy you may impart?

If you hear a prayer that moves you,
By its humble, pleading tone,
Join it. Do not let the seeker
Bow before his God alone.
Why should not your brother share
The strength of "two or three" in prayer?

If you see the hot tears falling
From a brother's weeping eyes,
Share them, and by kindly sharing,
Own your kinship with the skies.
Why should any one be glad
When a brother's heart is sad?

If a silvery laugh goes rippling,
Through the sunshine on his face,
Share it—'tis the wise man's saying—
For both grief and joy a place.
There's health and goodness in the mirth
In which an honest laugh has birth.

If your work is made more easy
By a friendly, helping hand,
Say so. Speak out brave and truly,
Ere the darkness veil the land.
Should a brother workman dear
Falter for a word of cheer?

Scatter thus your seeds of kindness,
All enriching as you go;
Leave them. Trust the Harvest Giver,
He will make each seed to grow.
So, until its happy end,
Your life shall never lack a friend.

—Rev. Dr. D. W. Hoyt, in *Herald and Presbyter*.

THE DANGERS OF PRESBYTERIAN PSALMODY.

In a recent visit to Scotland I have enquired and observed to a considerable extent in the matter of Presbyterian Church music, prompted not only by a strong general sympathy with Presbyterian forms of service, but by an enthusiasm for congregational song, and a desire for the deepening of the spiritual life through the public exercise of common praise. I have conversed with many ministers and precentors, and attended several services of diverse bodies; I have tried to understand the currents that are at work, and to decide if they are all making for progress. Do any of your readers care to hear what I have as a result to say?

I take it that the Presbyterian service is essentially democratic. The congregation are not spectators of symbolic or sacrificial rites, but are themselves the priests and the celebrants. The interest and solemnity of the service does not concentrate itself at one end of the Church; every corner is equal in importance and dignity. These principles point to an evenly distributed responsibility; if they are faithfully applied they must issue in a supreme care that during the singing every mind shall be alert, every voice engaged, every soul in communion. The human voice, as the expression of human feeling, stands first, and if mechanical instruments of music be added their only justification must be that they help the voices and while aiding the expression of the feeling deepen the reflex impression made upon the worshippers. Moreover the end is not art, but worship: let us have the assistance of art by all means, but first let us have worship.

In England the question whether congregational singing or choir singing is most desirable has begun to be discussed, but among the Scottish Presbyterians there can scarcely be a doubt upon the point. For my part, while I frequently gather inspiration from fine choir singing, I should deeply lament if it were to take the place of the more homely, rough and heart-compelling song of the congregation. At Park Church, Glasgow, what chaste music comes from the choir gallery! I have more than once fallen under its seductive spell. It is soothing and sweet. It may even be said to have its special message to the heart. But the song of the choir as an exclusive thing in our churches is at once impossible and undesirable. It is impossible, because only a very few churches can afford to engage singers of such skill that their music is above criticism. It is undesirable, because though one piece from the choir during the service may be a delight and a profit there is no doubt that four-fifths of the singing ought to be the work of the people themselves if we wish to stir them, to open their hearts, to move them by a common impulse.

The great change that has come over Presbyterian psalmody during recent years is due to the introduction of the organ and the harmonium. This has altered the whole condition of things. Let me say at once that I sympathize with the change, and regard these instruments, if properly used, as aids to praise. We cannot escape the influence of the senses, and surely the wealth of form and sound and colour in nature is a divine sanction for our art. Whether we will or not, nature educates our imaginations and dowers us with æsthetic feeling. You cannot found a system of worship

on a denial of all this. Let us therefore aim at the beautiful and carry our congregations as high as they will go. I must say, however, that I fear many Scottish congregations in getting an organ are prompted by mixed feelings, some of which are scarcely justifiable. The first feeling is often one of laziness. They want the organist to do the work for them. It is less trouble to be silent or to follow the song in a genteel simper than to sing out heartily. False gentility has killed the congregational voice in many English churches, and I fear that even in the robust air of the north the same relaxing influence is at work. Another feeling, no more justifiable, is the desire to imitate things English instead of progressing independently on the lines of Scottish feeling and tradition. I am afraid that many young people in Scotland are in the condition of a young lady I met in Chicago, who told me she was suffering from Anglomaniæ. I told her—and if there be any like her in Scotland I tell them—that I hope if they imitate England it will be in her best and not her weakest points.

My first and strongest position is in reference to the way in which the change from unaccompanied to accompanied singing is usually made. The custom is to dismiss the precentor or conductor and replace him by an organist. Now as a class organists are not good choirmasters, and many of them are out of sympathy with vocal work, being absorbed in the glorious instrument they play. I have spoken to and corresponded with many precentors who have been disestablished by the organist, and the question I have put to them is: "What means are being taken since you left to continue the training of choir and congregation?" The invariable answer is "none." Now the old "conductor of psalmody," though he may be out of fashion, was a useful man in his way. He often possessed special gifts in interesting and attracting young people and in keeping in good heart and earnestness that most fragile of organizations, an amateur choir. He had studied voice-training and sight-singing and knew how to teach them; he probably himself possessed a good tenor voice to pattern with. The Sunday scholars were often through him linked in song with the church; he collected money to buy tune books for them when they took their certificates, and he led them in constant services of song, sacred cantatas, and other healthy music. He taught the congregation in so far as they were willing to learn, and he was careful to urge the use of tunes generally known and the cautious introduction of new ones. Now I maintain that all this work of the "conductor" is just as much necessary with an organ as without. The fatal mistake that is being made lies in supposing that by some magic charm the singing, with an organ to back it up, will take care of itself. The evil of this policy is already manifest in many churches. The work of the old precentor will last for some years, but its impetus will gradually die out, and then there must be either a reaction or the practical cessation of vocal praise in the Presbyterian Church. The only third course is that a race of organists should be trained who are earnest choirmasters, and in sympathy with congregational and Sunday school singing. I repeat, however, that such organists are nowhere common. They are exceptional. To divide the work between two persons—the player may be a lady—is in the majority of cases the best course to pursue. The conductor will then be kept in full activity.

Fourteen years ago my father established a yearly course of normal training for choirmasters at the Tonic Sol-fa College in London. For the first few years about two-thirds of the students were from Scotland. Now, although the numbers are as large as ever, the proportion of Scotsmen is greatly diminished. It is now about one in ten. This point is of no importance to Scotland in so far as it merely affects our college, but if it means that the demand for choir and congregational trainers in Scotland is dropping off it is certainly serious, and this, I am afraid, is the case.

Take again prose chanting. Why should Scotland adopt this practice? It is purely Anglican. Prose chanting is unknown in either the French or the German Reformed Churches. I myself would believe in prose chanting if I could ever find a place where it was well done. The directions given in the Psalters are admirable, but no one observes them. When therefore I find year after year an ideal set up which nobody comes near, I conclude that the ideal is unattainable. The chanting in England is far too fast. Words are clipped and omitted and the gabble is most unseemly. An eminent German musician, choirmaster and organist of one of the chief Berlin churches, expressed to me his astonishment and distaste at the chanting he heard at St. Paul's. Americans (non-Episcopalians) have often spoken to me in the same way. A Church of England choirmaster told me the other day that his difficulty was not in training his boys to sing, but in getting boys who could read fast enough for the chanting of the Psalms. What an unconscious confession? In chanting young and old, slow and eager, should be united in a common act of reverent recitation of Scripture. Instead of that they rush through the words at express speed.

This brings me to my last point. I attended service last week in the Established Church of a small northern town in which the hymns were sung at a speed which simply shocked me. All my sense of reverence, all my feeling as a musician stood up in something like wrath as with a flippant staccato, and at the pace of a quick step, we hastened over the deepest thoughts and the most perfect literary forms. I looked round at the people. I recalled my conception of the depths and reserve and solidity of the Scottish character, and wondered how they liked it. Let me say, speaking from a wide experience, that the singing of hymns in the Church of England is not nearly so quick as it was ten or fifteen years ago. I at-

tend many services, and it is seldom now that I am distressed as I was the other day in Scotland. Musical feeling, as well as devotional feeling, is against quick singing. The chords must have time to be heard and to plant themselves in the mind. How far this excessive speed is practised in Scotland I am not competent to say. But wherever it may be heard it is neither musically nor worshipful.

I am told that there is one Presbyterian choir which consists entirely of males. This is Anglomaniæ in its most exaggerated form. There is certainly an artlessness and a shrillness about boys' voices which are attractive, and the ladies dote upon the surplined innocent whose chief thoughts, however (according to a recent Anglican writer), are of toffy. But the Church of England has boy choirs mainly for ecclesiastical reasons; from a desire to follow the tradition of the temple, and surely these considerations do not weigh in Scotland. Well-trained boys sing charmingly, but they need endless training, and the men who understand the boy's voice are not common. Town boys, by dint of hard work, can be taught to sing in the proper register; but country boys, who speak and shout in the open air all day, are hopeless. In English villages I have listened to most painful attempts to supply a boy choir in church. Boys, seated in front to lead the singing, are also weighted with a responsibility beyond their years. Women are in ordinary cases the best sopranos. At the Foundling Hospital chapel in London the other day I noticed an unconscious proof of this. One half of the gallery is filled with boys and one half with girls. The choirmaster teaches both; but it is most noticeable that he relies on the girls for singing. The boys hold their books up, but they have evidently been told not to sing. The girls yield the easiest and the best results. It is the survival of the fittest.

It is greatly to be desired that Presbyterians should avoid unintelligent copying of others, and develop their worship music in accordance with the genius of their communion. Then much of present waywardness and incoherence in their services will vanish, and they will advance upon the firm ground of enlisting music as a servant of devotion.—*J. Spencer Curwen, in Christian Leader*.

EVERY MAN'S WORK TRIED.

"The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is," 1 Cor. iii. 13. We used to think the fire would try every man's work of what quantity it was. But we have been brought to see that it is the quality God looks at, not quantity. In these days of so much working, we do well to pause and enquire of what are we building? When so busy for God let us ask ourselves the question: Is this really done for Him? or is it because I like to do it? Does my private life keep pace with my public profession? Am I the saint in the family circle which I seem to be in the young men's meetings? Do I carry my godliness into the workshop or into my business? Is there a savour of Christ about all my actions and transactions? In short, is the work of God in my own soul keeping clear ahead of my work for Him? If not, with all the appearance of zeal and work, it is simply piling up fuel for the burning. The fire will try the quality of the work. Is your work for God done in communion with Him? The great point is not what you do, but what you are. Are we walking with God? Are we delighting ourselves with Him? If so, the doing will come all right. It was after the joy of God's salvation had been restored to David that he taught transgressors God's law, Psal. xli. 12, 13. It was when Isaiah's lips had been touched with the live coal that he cried: "Here am I; send me." Isaiah vi. 8.—*Selected*.

EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS A MISSION.

None of us liveth to himself.—Rom. xiv. 7.

There is, perhaps, no one point which requires more to be pressed on the attention of Christian men, women and children in the present day than this: that every one is sent into the world with a mission—that is, for some particular object.

He is not sent here merely to vegetate and die; he is sent to do something for his Master; and there is no one who has not some talent which he can employ for God. Every one has a mission. We know what the world considers to be their mission—just to live as happily and comfortably as they can; just to kill time, without any thought of what will become of them when they are called from earth.

And what do many Christians regard as their one and only business in this world? Why, they think that their mission is to take care of the salvation of their own souls, and that when they have secured that they have done all that is required of them. My friends, that is but the beginning of the work, not the end. Having been led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, having become united to Him by a living faith and thus been saved forever, you are then to work, not for yourselves only, but for your fellow-creatures—for mankind.

Having been raised up "from death unto life," show the life which is in you; show it in action—press forward in your Christian course, and let your Master see that you are willing to do all that He has commanded you to do in His service. Endeavour to discover what is your mission in the world. "Mission" may be a cant word, but it contains the sum and substance of Christian usefulness in the world.

Endeavour to find out the gifts God has imparted to you, and set yourselves to work with them; and whether the door may be wide or narrow, whether it be in your power to benefit many or only few, if you do the work which God in His providence has given you to do, you will at the last hear your Master say of you: "He has done what he could." What we can do is all that our Master requires.—*Sir E. Buxton*.