

Singing Without Understanding.

If persons who have no spirit of praise in their hearts deem it their duty and privilege to engage in the external forms of divine worship, it is not strange that they should hire others who may profess skill in musical undertakings to perform that service for which they lack both the disposition and the qualifications. But in some cases the persons employed are so unfamiliar with the work that they do not undertake to sing anything without previously rehearsing and practicing it; and they sometimes find it necessary to select hymns as well as tunes in order to perform their parts.

It is hardly fair to criticize such people severely for their errors and failures, as they know very little of sacred music and loss of sacred song. One might rather heed the suggestion said to have been posted at the entrance of a meeting place in the wild West: "Do not shoot the organist; he is doing as well as he can." Nevertheless persons who are doing as well as they know how often need to be taught how to do better than they are doing, and we are not likely to mend our faults until we know them, nor to know them till we are told of them."

A person called to preach the gospel, who is waited upon by the choir leader with a list of hymns which are to be sung which have not the slightest connection with the subject under consideration for the day, can hardly fail to see the unfitness of some of the selections made. For example, a minister before opening the morning service was given the following hymn:—

Thus far the Lord has led me on;
Thus far His power prolongs my days;
And every evening shall make known
Some fresh memorial of His grace.

I lay my body down to sleep;
Peace is the pillow for my head;
While well-appointed angels keep
Their watchful stations round my bed.

As the preacher did not propose to have his congregation lay their bodies "down to sleep" that morning, he substituted a more appropriate hymn for the one selected by the choir.

In another instance there was handed to the preacher for the opening hymn on a Sunday morning that excellent patriotic song,

My country 'tis of thee,
which was to be followed by the funeral verses,

Sister, thou wast mild and lovely,
Gentle as the summer breeze,

both of which were about as appropriate to the occasion as the hymn called for to "improve the time" in a church where they were waiting for a belated bridal party; who as they at last entered the house heard the words,

Come on my partners in distress,
My comrades through this wilderness.

The remedy for much of this maladjustment of hymns and tunes is complex. First, the men who manage churches and church music should be converted to God, brought up out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and have new songs put in their mouths, even praise to the Lord; and if they will then let the word of Christ dwell in them richly, with all wisdom, they will be able to speak and admonish one another "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord. Then let the people who are merry or joyous, sing psalms, and if they do not know how to do it let them learn, taking the time and putting themselves under the training that is necessary for that purpose.

It is also important that they have a hymn book which contains old hymns which the older people know, as well as new hymns for the younger people to learn; a book which will not need to

be flung aside after six months' use, and which does not exclude all the standard hymns of the centuries for the purpose of admitting hymns and tunes which nobody ever heard before, and which nobody ever wants to hear again.

Finally, let the leader of the singing go through the book, and with a definite mark designate those tunes and hymns which can usually be sung under favorable circumstances. Let another mark designate hymns and tunes which can be sung at sight whenever called for. Let this book be given into the hands of the preacher with the understanding that he is entirely at liberty to select any of those familiar hymns, and give them out whenever he will, and they will be sung.

Such a method as this would avoid some very awkward complications, and would aid Christian people to sing with the spirit and with the understanding also, understanding and making others understand what they sing, instead of leaving the singing of the church to the mercy of worldly and uncultured people, who are in every way unfitted for the task of selecting the hymns and conducting the praises of the Most High.

We are to serve the Lord with reverence and with godly fear, and Christian people ought to be ashamed to bring discordant noise and senseless rhymes as an offering to the Lord in the service of His house. Their words, and tones, and emotions, and demeanor should speak the reverence of devout and honest souls. A worship thus offered will lift up the hearts of believers, will glorify God, and will elevate and bless those who unite in His worship.—*The Christian.*

A Fit Subject of Prayer.

On a pulpit cushion, where it could catch the eye of the minister, was laid a small slip of paper containing these words: "The prayers of this congregation are requested for a man who is getting rich." The appropriateness of such a prayer as this can hardly be questioned by any one who believes the truths which Christ has spoken concerning the rich, and who intends to profit by the warning which He has given. Rich men stand on slippery places. They are not easily accessible. They are flattered much and reproved but little; and as they bend their energies, their skill and their endeavors in the direction of acquiring wealth, they are in great danger of forgetting the eternal riches of righteousness, and burying themselves in worldliness and forgetfulness of God.

The Saviour faithfully warned the rich, and taught them that their path was fraught with danger, and that it was only with the greatest difficulty that they could enter the kingdom of God. He blessed the poor, but said "Woe" unto the rich, who had received their consolation. And the Great Apostle solemnly admonishes Timothy to "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us all things richly to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. vi. 17-19).

Do not forget to pray for the rich.—*Common People.*

Bad habits are grato bars in the devil's prison.

If the devil ever feels proud of his work, it must be when he looks at the man who is starving his wife and children to death to help keep the saloon-keeper fat.

The Central Regulator.

In the great cities and towns a large number of the time-pieces are electrically connected with the observatory clock at Washington, and so every day at noon the seconds are marked simultaneously by the electric current flashed from this one central time-keeper. By this practice absolute uniformity and correctness of time are ensured. This exact uniformity is not brought about by comparing one clock with another, or regulating one time-piece by another, but by one clock regulating the others electrically, when exactly at midday the standard clock makes the connection which completes the circuit passing through all the connected time-pieces, and regulates all of them at once.

Humanity needs regulating; Christians need regulating; and a great many of them have tried the system of regulation by comparison, with very poor results. It has been found impossible to make a number of clocks standing side by side keep time with each other. One will be fast, another will be slow—they will not keep time together—but, if they can be connected electrically with one standard time-piece, there is then no difficulty in maintaining substantial uniformity.

The uniformity of the Church of Christ will not come through churches comparing and compromising, and yielding to each other's wishes, and adjusting themselves to each other's ways. They will never come to an agreement in this way. This method has been tried again and again. The only way in which the people of God can come together and be united is by coming under the direct control of Christ, the great Head of the Church. If all the members of the body be vitally connected with the living Head, then there will be little difficulty about their keeping step with the march of His providence and grace; and in following the Lord, and walking closely with Him they cannot be very far from each other. Two things which are exactly like a third thing must be like each other, and two men that are like Christ cannot be greatly unlike each other.

The great hindrance to uniformity among Christians is, people compare themselves among themselves, and measure themselves by themselves, and thus continually fail in their endeavors after unity. They contend over their names and creeds, and each is able to find fault enough with the other; but let them drop all this and come to Jesus Christ Himself, and seek to shape their lives in accordance with the revealed will and Word of God, and they cannot fail to come nearer and still nearer to each other.

In such a system of regulation as this, we need not wait for any one else, we need not wait to see whether other clocks will take their time from the central standard, or whether other men will shape their lives by the Word of God. We have each of us simply to connect ourselves with the great central standard, and determine that we will do right, no matter who is wrong; and if we will do this, we shall soon find ourselves coming nearer and nearer to that unity which Christ desires, and which shall be a glory to His Church and a blessing to the world.—*The Ar-mory.*

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