

into *piano* and *forte* lines, but time fails. The prevalent notion that *piano*, or soft singing, is exclusively appropriate to soft, tender emotion, is a fallacious one. Intense suppressed wrath or menace are most forcibly expressed by *piano*, and such a *piano* is sharply distinguished from that of tenderness by its *hard*, dry *accentuation*. The choirmaster should select well-defined examples of the various kinds of *piano*, and cause his choir to make trials of comparison. By causing one-half of his choir to sing in the one kind of *piano*, and the remaining half in the other, in the manner of question and answer, the peculiarities of each variety are made more apparent to the singers, and a perception of *dramatic purpose* is awakened in their minds. *Piano* and *forte*, regarded apart from their dramatic significance are simply the result of pure physical strength and skillful management of the breath.

Strictly speaking, it belongs more to the voice-trainer than the conductor to develop this; the most a choirmaster can do in this direction is to exercise his voices *en masse* in scales, pointing out as the objects to be attained—evenness of tone, purity of vowel sound, and duration of each sound to be as *long as possible*. With reference to this last, the choir should concentrate their attention upon the choirmaster, and make a habit of obeying him *instantaneously* and *simultaneously*. He should tell them to inhale a full, but not *too deep* breath, and the moment this is done, he must give a signal to attack the sound.

Any delay between the accomplished act of inhalation and the delivery of the voice is fatal, because the laryngeal muscles are then at their greatest tension, and quickly become so fatigued that they cannot control the emission of tone, but allow it to escape in irregular gasps. This should be most carefully avoided.

Steady practice in sustaining single sounds, first with medium, afterwards with increased force of voice, will so strengthen the laryngeal muscles, that the choir will be prepared to study piano-singing more exclusively. To sing good *piano*, there are required a *constant supply of full breath*, and great muscular power to hold the current of air *in check* in its passage through the larynx, so that the *vocal chords* may vibrate *gently*, and with the smallest possible motion. When the current of air is projected against the lips of the *cordes vocales* with the entire muscular force at a singer's command, the motion is *great*, and the vibrations large and powerful; this constitutes good *forte* singing. Bad *piano* results from a meagre supply of breath and inertness of the laryngeal muscles, producing an impression of feebleness or exhaustion. No labor should be grudged to acquire this delightful accomplishment.

Only let a spirit of absolute submission to the choirmaster pervade the minds of the singers, and a spirit of work possess all, then some measure of success is *certain*.

The chief cause of bad *forte* singing is indolence. To keep a phrase or passage equally strong from beginning to end requires, if it be long, considerable physical effort.

But it is notorious that choir and chorus singers cherish a deep-rooted aversion to all *sustained effort*—they sing *forte* literally in mouthfuls; hence the prevalence of *bawling* and *shouting* in choirs and choruses, instead of proper *forte* singing.

The remedy is self-evident, and need not be further dilated upon. Let me only add, in connection with this and the subject of *work* generally, that the choirmaster should—

"Set his face as a flint,  
Whet his tongue as a sword,"

against that senseless affectation of *ennui* which the women of our day so frenziedly cling to as the badge of good society.

When the boarding-school and the family governess have done their barbarous utmost to deform girls' voices on Dicken's "Prisms and Pippin's" method, the choirmaster finds them *worse* than *useless*, and a sensitive musical organization feels them to be disagreeable and offensive. Of the varieties of accentuation and emphasis, besides the more minute ramifications of this subject, this is not the time to speak; several papers might be very profitably devoted to breaking the subject down into workable proportions, and I have confined myself to opening up the subject in a very general way, since I could not hope, in the limits of one, or even two papers, to treat it more in detail.

To acquire proficiency in singing *piano* and *forte*, intelligently and effectively, great patience and faith-

ful perseverance are necessary, the formation of all good habits require these, and good singing must become—not an exceptional or *chance* thing—but the unvarying natural habit of a choir or chorus. Allow me to conclude by begging that choir-singers will begin to look upon their meetings for practice as opportunities for work, not for amusement; if the *mind* be not engaged, progress is simply impossible, and dissolution is not far off. To choirmasters I would say, "Be in earnest; think more of the work and less about your own talents." An impassioned truthful soul has no room in it for vanity and idleness.

Be in love with your art, speak of it always with enthusiasm, resent as a shallow impertinence the notion that it is a mere drawing room amusement, to be taken up and laid aside as caprice dictates. This is the age of a great musical crusade in our churches, and it behoves our choirmasters to regard themselves as apostles of worship-music, and to fight in the cause with apostolic fervour. J. McL.

#### NOTES FROM MONTREAL.

Above the din and tumult of political strife and polemical controversy which rages in this city and Province, I am pleased to find that Presbyterianism has made steady progress. Its adherents claim for it, including mission churches and stations, some sixteen congregations, the value and importance of which in the Province of Quebec would be difficult to over-estimate. When we think of the number of persons who through their instrumentality are brought under religious influences; the numbers who from week to week have the simple gospel preached to them; and the numbers again who are being instructed in the particular doctrines and faith of the Presbyterian Church; and this in a city and district where error is being taught by the "thousand" emissaries of Rome, we form some faint idea of their importance. The Presbyterians of Montreal can boast of some fine church buildings, which do them credit, and compare favorably with those of other denominations. A stranger in Montreal on the Sabbath is rather puzzled how to divide himself, so that he can hear as many of the crack preachers of the commercial capital as possible—indeed, he would like to be in two or three places at one and the same time, but this is not possible. I made my way to

#### COTE STREET CHURCH,

which is a modest, old-fashioned building. It may have suited its purpose in the earlier history of Montreal, but from its appearance and situation it has outlived its day, and the congregation are about to remove to their new church on Dorchester and Crescent Streets, which would seem to be the largest and most costly of our ecclesiastical edifices. But to come back to "Cote Street:" On Sunday morning I found a large congregation present. The preacher was the Rev. A. B. Mackay, of Brighton, England, who had only arrived on the Saturday previous. Mr. Mackay is a writer and preacher of some note in England, hence more than ordinary interest was manifested to hear him. He is a man about thirty-five years of age, with an intelligent and rather prepossessing appearance. He has a profusion of long flowing black hair which is becoming to him. The sermon, which was very interesting, was founded on John xx. 24-29, the subject being "The unbelief of Thomas," or "The relation of Thomas to the risen Saviour." The following points received special attention: (1) Thomas as a casuist with the disciples; (2) Thomas as a confessor with Christ; (3) The confession of Thomas. This church has been without a pastor for some time, but if rumour be true the attention of the congregation is turned to one who, should he accept, will be an important addition to the pulpit talent of Montreal. The next visited was

#### KNOX CHURCH,

which stands on the corner of Dorchester and Mansfield Streets. The pastor is the Rev. James Fleck, who was pastor of a church in the city of Armagh, in Ireland, and who visited this country some years ago, making favorable impressions wherever he preached. By the removal of the Rev. Mr. Thornton to Scotland, Knox Church became vacant, and having transmitted a call to Mr. Fleck, he accepted, and about eighteen months ago was inducted into his present charge. Mr. Fleck is a young man of good abilities, is an eloquent and impressive preacher, and is gathering around him a large and intelligent congregation. He preached at the evening service, taking for his text the first clause

of the fourth verse of the third chapter of Revelation: "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments." The preacher showed and illustrated the point that it is possible for a man to be a Christian in the midst of surrounding wickedness, and under the most discouraging circumstances. He concluded an eloquent discourse with a graphic description of the sins peculiar to a city like Montreal, and said that even amidst such wickedness the children of God are safe; for faith is imperishable. In going through the streets of this great city one is amazed at the number of churches which meet the eye, but what will be his feeling when he learns that many of these churches are the means of spreading soul-destroying errors, and enslaving a noble people in worse than Egyptian bondage. It is gratifying to have evidence that against all the efforts and devices of Popery, Protestantism generally has marshalled her hosts, and that among the many successful efforts which are being put forth for the overthrow of this and other false systems, not the least important is the stand which our Church has taken on behalf of civil and religious liberty. A pamphlet might be written descriptive of the geographical position, the splendid scenery, the costly warehouses and mansions of this great city. On these points it is not my intention to dwell; but at present any reference to Montreal would be incomplete without making mention of the magnificent Hotel which was opened on the 28th ult. "The Windsor" is said not to be second to any Hotel in the world. It is a huge establishment, finished in the most superb style and conducted on first principles, and it is but natural that Montrealers will look with pardonable pride upon what is in every sense of the word a first-class Hotel. K.

Windsor Hotel, Montreal, 4th Feb., 1878.

#### THE SABBATH SCHOOL SYSTEM.—IV.

MR. EDITOR,—Our last letter set forth and emphasized what is regarded as a true definition of the Sabbath School work, a department of the Church's mission, in which she handles the truth by catechetical methods, with a view of giving instruction; by this, awakening consideration, producing conviction, and leading to conversion and conformity to Christ.

The Word of God in a persistent manner enforces TEACHING. Christ comes, and in the highest form stands forth as the Great Teacher sent from God. By statement and example He places supreme importance on what we call the School Method of Christian work; and that this is a part of the work of the Church, his true successor and representative on the earth, cannot fairly be questioned. Our

#### FOURTH FACT.

The Church is entrusted with the double treasure—the Truth and the Man. We might also add the methods best suited to apply the truth to the man, and by which the man is in the fullest possible measure led up to the stature of Christ Jesus. The Church, then, is entrusted with the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of all coming under her care and influence.

This comprehends what is called our "Sabbath School System." It is called "Sabbath," because it is the specially appointed day for continued attention to this work. It is called School, because of the methods employed, and the form the instruction takes. It may be said that Christ made little of methods, but He magnified life. This is true; it is a great truth, a truth that must permeate all our conceptions of work. No one will surely conclude that He had no methods according to which He presented, pressed and unfolded the truth to His disciples and hearers. Wherever the Spirit was to go the wheels went: the Spirit was in the wheels. When the Spirit was lifted up the wheels were lifted up also. Ezekiel's vision is not the dead symbol of the past, but a present and pervading truth that enters into the ministry of Christ. Because of the fulness of His life, the harmony of His methods with the nature of man, He knew what was in man; because of the clear wisdom that entered into His ministry, the methods are not obtruded, as in our work—we do not hear the movements of the machinery; and the more we become conformed to Him in Spirit, in character, in methods of work, and in handling the truth, the more fully will we serve God in our day and generation; the more faithful will we be to the truth and the people under our influence.

We are at this stage of our consideration led to observe: The Truth is intrusted to the Church for INSTRUCTION—Instruction concerning God's nature,