

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

If we are to sing at all in church it may reasonably be supposed that we are to sing our best. Devotion is not helped by bad music, though all who attend our churches seem hardly to realize that fact. We have met with excellent individuals, "pillars of the church" in some instances, who honestly prefer poor music as "more spiritual" than anything of a higher class; though in what way they find it stimulating to their religious life it might puzzle them to explain. Such persons are probably very little cultivated musically, or they have, as we expressively say, "no ear for music." They forget that the inharmonious sounds to which they are so indulgent may prove a serious stumbling block in the way of another, whose natural love of music has been finely cultivated, so that the drone or drawl which has in it a certain attraction for the one, will be absolute torture to the other. Much is due, no doubt, to early association, and while we shall find most young people willing, and even eager for a higher class of church music, older persons there are who have been trained in a puritan school, ready to regard any innovation upon old customs as a machination of Satan against the purity of the churches. This is a prejudice which, of course, only time can cure, but which time is curing; if slowly, yet most surely. We remember when it was quite customary in the older English Nonconformist churches to sing such a tune as "Cranbrooke" to a common-metre hymn; in some such style as the following:

"Grace! 'tis a char-ar-mi-ing sound,  
Har-mo-ni-ous to-o the-e ear-r;"

and to shout it after a fashion which made the last two lines

"Heaven with the echo shall resound,  
And all the earth shall hear,"

likely to be literally accomplished.

Well, we have changed all that. But while we have gained very much, is it treason to suggest that there is real danger of our losing something too? What we cannot afford to part with in our service of praise is *earnestness*. Meody was right when he said that he would not preach at one end of the church, while the choir was reading newspapers at the other. He knows if any man does the assistance which hearty singing is to the preacher. Indeed, who man ever else is ignorant of the fact, the minister will be sure to discover that music which is only cultivated and not earnest does not aid the devotional feeling of the worshippers, is not in fact a service of praise at all.

What we want then is *earnestness* and *cultivation*. And surely these attainments ought not to be beyond our reach, although in too many of our churches it seems as if to secure the one, were to take a long farewell of the other. When last in England we had the pleasure of worshipping in the church of the Rev. H. R. Haweis, St. Mary-le-bone. It seemed to us that the gifted author of "Music and Morals" had succeeded in securing a service which as nearly as possible reached the ideal of what church worship ought to be. The tunes chosen for the hymns and chants were not beyond the range of the congregation. All sung and sung heartily, including the minister. For the anthem (which was the only part of the service rendered by the choir alone) we had the immortal "Hallelujah chorus." Never before was it our good fortune to hear this sublime conception with anything like appropriate surroundings, and never before had it seemed so divinely inspired. We have heard exception taken to anthems in church as "undevotional." But it seemed to us that had everything else failed to stir one throb of worship in our hearts; "those 'Hallelujahs'" would have borne us as on angel's wings, to the very gates of heaven. Very different was our experience in another church which we attended for several weeks, in the north of England. Here, too, there was an elaborate choir, guiltless of ever performing anything but first-class music, but the congregation appeared to have resigned itself to hopeless indifference during the singing of the hymns. Certainly the tunes chosen were not of a character to invite their co-operation. A colder or more formal service, as far as the musical part of it was concerned, could scarcely have been imagined. One Sunday evening, at the close of the sermon, the well-known hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul," was announced. "Surely," we thought, "all our tongues will be unloosed at last. But no, an elaborate prelude was played by the organist in the minor key, and then the choir took it up, and skilfully rendered the whole four verses in a manner, no doubt satisfactory to themselves, but which no ordinary mortal could have presumed to follow.

It is perhaps natural that a highly cultivated organist and choir should be tempted to forget that they owe any consideration to the congregation; but it ought to be brought before their notice that when the whole body of worshippers are condemned to silence throughout an entire service by their elaborate performances, they are not helping, but hindering the true "service of praise." It will, perhaps, be urged that the congregation as a whole is not cultivated sufficiently to take its proper part in such a service. If this is so, does it not suggest the propriety of such cultivation? We have often wondered that the congregational singing class is not more frequently to be met with in our churches. We believe that wherever it has been attempted in England it has proved abundantly successful. We might mention Dr. Allon's church in particular as showing how much may be done in this direction. In this instance the organist can scarcely be said so much to have come down to the needs of the people as to have trained the people themselves up to a very high degree of musical perfection. "Singing," says Henry Ward Beecher, "is that natural method by which thoughts are reduced to feeling, more easily, more surely, and more universally than any other. You are conscious when you go to an earnest meeting for instance, that while hymns are being sung, and you listen to them, your heart is, as it were loosened, and there comes out of those hymns to you a realization of the truth such as you never had before. There is a provision in singing for the development of almost every phase of Christian experience. How many times have I been lifted out of a depressed state of mind into a cheerful mood by the singing before I began to preach! How often in looking forward to the Friday night meeting has my prevailing thought been, not of what I was going to say, but of the hymns that would be sung. My prayer-meeting consists largely of the singing of hymns which are full of prayers, and

my predominant thought in connection with our Friday-night gatherings is 'Oh, that sweet, joyful singing!'" We would hope that these words express the experience of many, and in order that we may still more heartily realize them, let us care for and cultivate our "congregational singing."

M. B. STEVENSON.

## THE MILL OF ST. HERBOT—A BRETON STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PATTY."

## CHAPTER X.

THE BAZVALAN DOES HIS DUTY.

Madame Rusquec drew back as quickly as she could from the ring; she waited only to hear that Jean Marie had recovered his senses, and then taking Louise's hand, she left the fête. She had seen many inquisitive glances levelled at her daughter, and the girl's agitation had become so uncontrollable, that it was a relief to escape from prying eyes.

She did not speak till they were near the mill; then she looked severely at Louise, as she said, "What is this, vain child? Didst thou set the brothers Mao to wrestle for thy sake? Thou shouldst be thankful that such a man as Jean Marie has noticed thee, and thou must be more careful too not to give him cause for jealousy. Poor man! he is badly hurt, I fear. But at one time I felt sure he would win."

Louise did not answer. Presently she burst out as if she could not restrain the words, "But Christophe is a fine, brave lad." As soon as they reached the cottage she flung herself on a bench, and laying her head on the table, she sobbed herself almost into violent hysterics.

The excitement and vexation had been quite too much for her. The day that she had looked forward to with such delight had proved an utter failure; beyond the pleasure of wearing her dress, she had not had any of the enjoyment she coveted. And yet, when after a while she grew calmer, and thought over her day, there was abundant consolation in the remembrance of Christophe's words. He had conquered, too, in the struggle, which she began to see had indeed been for her. She was sorry for Jean Marie; but he had looked so evil that she shrank into herself at the remembrance of his dark, revengeful face. She wondered that she could ever have wished such a man to propose for her. "He would have killed me if I had refused him." She trembled, and tried to think of something else.

Her mother had been watching her; she saw her sudden paleness, and she grew compassionate. "Thou hadst best go to bed, child—thou art tired and over-done."

Louise went to her mother, and held her forehead to be kissed. "I shall be quite well when I have slept," she said. "I wish I had not gone to-day, but waited for the dancing to-morrow."

"Thou canst not go to-morrow, Louise. I cannot go down the hill again; and after what chanced to-day, thou must not be seen alone at the Pardon."

"Oh, mother, mother, how can I give up the dancing, I, have thought of it so long? And think of my new skirt and bodice! what else was it made for?"

Madame Rusquec kept silence, but she shook her head and frowned; her resolution was taken and she never bandied words with Louise. She was vexed beyond any power of expressing vexation; Jean Marie Mao, the best match in Huelgoat—a man notorious for his avoidance of women—had singled out Louise for notice, and beneath her eyes he had fallen, seriously hurt; for although he had recovered his senses, he had been carried to the Presbytery, and was said to be unable to stand; and Louise, instead of being really grieved or saddened, as soon as she had got rid of her temporary agitation, had already forgotten the cause of it, and could talk of dancing while the man who had so distinguished her lay ill, it might be dying; for Madame Rusquec had known more than one instance in which death had resulted from these violent falls.

Louise was in many ways a spoiled child, but she knew it was useless to struggle against her mother's will; she sobbed a few minutes longer, said it was very cruel, and then, tired out by the day's excitement, she got into bed and cried herself to sleep.

She wakened happier next morning, and she consoled herself during the two remaining days of the Pardon by reflecting that she should feel very shy and strange without her mother; and she was more reconciled to the disappointment when Mathurin brought word that neither of the brothers Mao had reappeared at St. Herbot.

Madame Rusquec avoided all mention of the wrestling, and her mother's silence oppressed Louise with a sense of wrong-doing most irksome to her bright, pleasure-loving nature. She kept out-of-doors as much as possible.

On the third morning, she had taken the cow down the valley, and had bidden Barba follow her when she could be spared; for the little Barba did not lead a holiday life; though she was but eight years old, the poor child had to cook and wash, and clean when cleaning was required, for her father. To her Louise was like some beautiful fairy queen, to whom the word "duties"—the word that held so large a place in Barba's poor little life—was unknown. Presently Louise heard footsteps behind her, but she knew they were not Barba's—they were too heavy, and besides, they were uneven. At first she hoped they might be Christophe's, but as the steps hurried to overtake her, the limp told her, before she turned round, that her pursuer was the red-haired tailor.

"Aha, my pretty maid! so you are none the worse for the night you got at the wrestling." Coëffic put his head on one side, and his leer of admiration made him more hideous than ever.

"Why should I be the worse? How is the farmer? I hope he is better. Come, come, neighbour, you are the first person I have seen who can tell me any news. Who climbed the pole the best? Was the dancing good? and who were the best dancers?"

"How many questions! No one knows how the farmer is, because no one has seen him. And as for the dancing, when the sun and moon are both out of the firmament, the stars cannot choose but shine the best. There was no Louise