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## The Church Service.

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THE Church has never been so ready as now to respond with an earnest spirit of worship and appreciation to whatever effort is conscientiously made to uplift the hearts of the people to God through the service, and I feel that those of us who take an important part in a sacred service in His house should more fully realize our wide opportunities for usefulness and should strive to extend our influence by patient and faithful work in guiding the congregation into a knowledge of the best and most intelligent use of music.

I agree with those who think that congregational singing is the most important part of the musical service, but I do think our strong belief in this form of worship is because of its intelligibility, and because the people, having both words and music before them, and receiving the full meaning of the hymn or tune into their hearts, find there a response to their needs which, by proper methods, could be given them in all parts of the service. Even hymns are often put to anything but a holy use. For example, in some churches we sing to permit those to leave the church who do not wish to commune with us at the Lord's Supper. In a recent article on congregational singing, the writer most truly said: "Suppose we should treat prayer in this way: 'While Dr. Harris offers prayer, the usual collection will be taken.' 'While I offer a few closing words of prayer, those not wishing to commune will please go quietly out.'" But the heartfelt singing of the hymn by the congregation, led by a choir and organ under the hand of one who feels the full meaning of it all, is the most perfect uplifting of the heart to God in His house. It is said that the full tone of the congregation in hymn or chant was to Henry Smart full reward for his best effort; and we all know of at least one church, Dr. Alion's in London, where, beside the hymn-books, there are books with the words and music of all the anthems in every pew, and the congregation, forming one enormous choir, sing all parts of the musical service. I have two different anthem-books as used in Dr. Alion's church, and the music is certainly of the very best.

If the influence for good in the congregational singing is derived largely from the fact that the people are able to worship intelligently through the music, we have only to make the rest of the musical service intelligible in order to have the people uplifted and strengthened and blessed in their worship with the choir, although taking no active part themselves. This can be accomplished by having the words of all anthems and choir numbers placed in the hands of the worshippers. I know of one church where a book containing such words is used; but, of necessity, such a book must be limited in the number and variety of its anthems, and perhaps selections made by a compiler may not meet the require-

ments of all churches. But it is a rapidly growing custom in our churches to place in all pews a "leaflet" or "calander" of the services of the week, and on this can be easily printed the words of all the choir music. To me this method seems an almost perfect one, because there is surely no limit to the anthems one may select from, and, besides such words, there may also be placed the complete order of service, or a collect, or a short sentence or Psalm pointed for chanting. It has become customary in many churches to have occasionally what are called "praise services," and it is to be regretted that these services, which offer so many opportunities for embodying high ideals in church music, should so often degenerate into what are little better than sacred concerts. In our effort in the regular services of the church is directed toward the enlargement of the spiritual influence of the music, we should not lower our standard when we have a service in which music is the most prominent feature. If a cantata is to be sung, its meaning should be emphasized by a service made as rich as possible in its dignity and fulness; and if a number of anthems or selections are to be used, they should all relate to one subject, and should be rendered in a spirit befitting the place and day.

Of course "the best" in music may have many different meanings to as many different persons; but, surely, in the realm of church music it is susceptible of but one interpretation—that dignified and proper setting of sacred words or hymns by such of our musicians as most fully rise to a perfect conception of their meaning. In using such music, many in the congregation will say that they cannot appreciate it; that they wish something light that will please the ear, in the shape, perhaps, of more quartet or solo work, but experience has shown that if an organist conscientiously works along the higher level, striving not only to sing fine music, but seeking to show how, in its deeper meaning and fuller expression, such music sets forth beauties before unthought of, such criticism and suggestion will gradually cease, and the people will earnestly and willingly unite in a desire to taste even more deeply of the hitherto hidden treasures. It may seem impossible to place the musical part of the service above criticism, and if a choir and organist render music of a frivolous nature, and solely for the purpose of showing their skill, or the quality of their voices, it will be impossible to do so; but if the choir show by their work that it is their constant effort to lead the congregation in worship and praise, or to emphasize, in music wisely and carefully chosen, such truths as the minister may be striving to teach, that effort will become thoroughly appreciated, and even if from a purely musical standpoint their work may not be perfect, there will be no spirit of criticism, because the people will feel that, with the minister, the choir and organist are filling a "sacred office" in God's consecrated house.