

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

IMPROVED CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

MR. EDITOR.—If I may be allowed space for a few words, I would second, emphatically, the remarks made by "J. McL." in your last number, in reference to the adaptation of sacred words to secular tunes. It may, at one period of the Church's history, have been expedient to adapt certain stirring Hymns to certain airs popular at the time, but surely there is no occasion for anything of the kind now. It is a fact that the best musical talent of the world has been devoted to sacred music, and the ablest and best composers living at the present time are also devoting much of their time to it, so that there is no scarcity of tunes to which Hymns of any character may be adapted, and there is no reason why the frothy and vapid airs which have crept into our Hymnology should not be banished from every tune book not only in our churches but in our Sabbath Schools. They are inventions of the evil-one to tickle the ears and distract the attention from a due appreciation of the meaning of the words. J. McL., has not mentioned the worst tunes that have been set to sacred words. "Home Sweet Home," and even "Annie Lisle," are grave and somewhat sorrowful in their character, but when we have "Annie Lawrie" and "Scots Wha Hae"; or "When the Swallows Homeward Fly," set to "Rock of Ages Cleft for Me," it is beyond endurance, and every precentor or leader should strenuously oppose the introduction of all such trash. Let us have nothing but "grave sweet melody."
TUTTI.

RULES FOR CHOIRS.

The "Tonic Sol-fa Reporter," on being asked for Rules for Choirs, replies as follows:

"We are repeatedly asked by correspondents for a set of Model Rules for choirs and elementary classes. The circumstances of these societies are however, so widely different, that it is impossible to draw up any rules that would apply to all, and we think that rules are more likely to be kept if they formulate the intention and purpose of each choir or committee, than if they were suggested or supplied from without. The "Teacher's Manual" supplies a good deal of information on this matter. Speaking generally, an elaborate constitution is not advisable, a few working rules being sufficient. If the rules are long many members will not read them, and more will forget them. In every case we must rely more upon the tact and discipline of the conductor, and the way in which he is backed up by the secretary and leading members, than upon a paper constitution. But this does not mean that organization is of no use. A class in which the conductor unlocks the door, lights the gas, vaults on to the platform and jumps down when he has done, gives out the books and receives the subscriptions, is neither decent nor in order. Every class must have its secretary, and the older and more experienced he is the better, for he can help the conductor in a hundred ways. In every class, too, the attendance should be taken, so that each member may know that his or her absence is noticed, and punctual arrival recorded. Occasionally we hear of classes in which the books are given and no subscription is charged. This is not wise. People value as a rule what they pay for; or to put the point less bluntly, the payment is a useful reminder that they are getting valuable instruction, and not merely enjoying a pleasant evening once a week.

"A conductor has to be affable and obliging to everybody, and at the same time, he has to be an autocrat, and a strict disciplinarian. This is very difficult. The extreme either of severity or laxity will break up any choir, and perhaps more choirs are broken up through the conductor holding the reins too loose than through his drawing them too tight. As we look back on cases of failure within our recollection, this seems to be our experience. The conductor who loses his temper will always fail, but we are apt to forget that pupils come to learn, and that they will stand a great deal of discipline if they feel that its aim is to keep up the standard of work, and find that they are themselves advancing in knowledge. So far from pupils liking an easy-going teacher, who puts it to the vote what key they shall sing "Hail Smiling Morn" in, and consults the members as to what pieces they shall have at a concert, they like a man who has the firmness of a drill-serjeant, and who, while never speaking peevishly, sarcastically, or rudely, quietly

holds his own on the strength of his superior knowledge, and worries the irregular, talkative, and non-singing members, until their life is a burden, and for the sake of peace they are obliged to work."

THE SABBATH.

Serene and holy day, thy blessed light
Rests softly on the landscape still and fair;
Thou art an earnest of supreme delight,
A token here of heavenly love and care.

Is thy sweet influence wafted on the wings
Of angels stooping to a world of woe;
Or is its source beyond created things,
In Him who gave the day and blessed it too?

To weary hearts a solace and a rest;
And in the toil of life a solemn pause;
A day for man to do his Lord's behest,
To render thanks and learn His holy laws.

O blissful emblem of a glorious day,
When sin shall vex the ransomed soul no more,
When Death can ne'er again assert his sway,
Nor sorrow dim the eyes that wept before.

Thou art the dawning of a brighter morn,
And in its light refulgent will expand
To endless day, where radiant skies adorn
The sinless Sabbath of the better land.

Thine are the memories of that early hour
When Galilean women sought with tears
Their buried Lord,—they wot not of His power,
When lo, His own loved voice dispelled their fears.

Rabboni, blessed Lord, be ever near,
Diffuse Thy heavenly peace within my heart;
There is no hallowed rest without Thee here,
The Sun and Sabbath of my soul Thou art.

Kincardine.

C. C. A. F.

PSALMODY.

MR. EDITOR,—I am glad to observe that discussion on Psalmody has begun in your columns, and beg to state that one of the greatest obstacles to the training of our young people in our Church music is the want of suitable and cheap books of instruction. If a minister should form his young people into a class for singing and invite them to bring what music books they have, they might produce books in profusion such as "New Lutes," "Lutes of Zion," "Melodeons," "Dulcimers," "Harmonists," "Brown's-Robertson's," etc. But he could not train the class with such a variety. He must have a class-book in the hands of all the learners. Then if he were to try the selection of one of those as the class-book, he would find all of them too dear to purchase, and most of them filled with tunes unfamiliar in the Presbyterian Church, or unsuitable for our worship. I have met with this difficulty, and have to delay the teaching until suitable books can be got.

This want could be supplied either by our booksellers importing books from Britain, or by publishing new books of their own under the editorship of some competent person acquainted with the wants of the Presbyterian Church.

Books could be imported and sold at such prices as would admit of their being put into every child's hand. For example there are before me three little books which would suffice for theoretical instruction. 1. "The National Rudiments of Music," by John D'Esté, Musical Doctor, Cambridge: 16 p.p., price three half-pence. 2. "The School-board Singing Tutor," with exercises and songs for schools and classes, by Dr. A. S. Holloway, published by William Reeves, London: price two-pence. 3. "First Lessons in Singing," embracing an explanation of the first principles of music and a variety of examples and exercises, selected and arranged for use in classes, p.p., 64, price sixpence: published by William Hamilton, Glasgow. Tune books may be had with familiar tunes harmonized in four parts, with Psalm verses underneath, equally cheap and adapted for class practice, from Hamilton, and no doubt from other publishers in the Old Country.

Perhaps some of your ministerial readers will be pleased to know that such works as those referred to are obtainable, and perhaps some business reader may receive from these hints an inspiration profitable to himself and advantageous to the Presbyterian portion of the community. At all events I think I have pointed out an obstacle to the much needed improvement of our congregational singing which might be easily removed.

M.

Slayner, December 29th, 1877.

THE SABBATH SCHOOL SYSTEM.—II.

MR. EDITOR.—We closed our last letter by noticing the important fact that the modern Sabbath School System is largely a growth outside of Church organizations. It has been fostered to a considerable extent, by leading men in all the Evangelical Churches, in some form of Associations, more than by the deliberate action of organized churches.

By these means, the work was proved to be important, its moral influence grew; its bearing on the highest well-being of the Church and her children was felt and acknowledged. And the Church is gradually incorporating the movement as a special department of her mission. In taking account of her life and labor from year to year the RELIGIOUS EDUCATION of the people receives special attention. This is the first important fact in our Sabbath School System.

SECOND FACT.

The place given to Sabbath School work, by the Church and by the leading minds in the Church is that it is SUPPLEMENTAL, and in no sense, and under no conditions, to be regarded as a SUBSTITUTE for family teaching. Where the school takes the place of the family it will be accounted for by the doctrinal basis of the Church on which the work rests, and the tendency of that doctrine to substitute the Church for the family instead of incorporating its life for stimulating to the upbringing of a godly seed.

In all the outside institutions that consider the Sabbath School work systematically, of which Chautauqua and Thousand Islands Parliament are representatives, the above fact is carefully stated and enforced.

In the Chautauqua scheme of lessons for Sabbath School teachers, the emphasizing of this is one of the first duties of the course of instruction. The Sabbath School Itinerant of seven or ten years ago may have expressed views that were in antagonism to true family life and duty, but that has passed away, and now the fact that the Church has taken up the work and organized it with her life, and is yearly becoming alive to its importance, precludes the possibility of danger to a healthy and hopeful discharge of family duty.

The Sabbath School System takes notice of this important truth, that while the family is first in the order of time, and of history and society, and for race, life, and a godly seed, first in importance, yet it is not an isolated and self-contained institution.

There is the state, or civil life, the Church and her religious life; they are all dependent on each other and are or ought to be co-operating to the one great end of helping toward strong and holy manhood in Christ Jesus. The institutions God has set up in this world are like the classes for whom they were intended; they influence and are influenced by each other; the life of the one feeds and is fed by the special life of the other; "no one liveth to himself," but contributes to the general well-being.

All Ecclesiastical organizations have a doctrinal basis on which their attitude to the Sabbath School depends. The Baptist proclaims his *Universal Negative*: no Church doctrine, no Bible doctrine as to the relation of children to Church life, or believing parents; but he assiduously prosecutes the work upon the general sentiment of doing good, and the useful idea, "that good done at this end of life is most fruitful," especially to his theory of sacraments.

The refined Sacramentarian regards the children as brought into a definite relation to the Church and her life by the ordinance of baptism, and by this ordinance the divine life is in some sense begun, and is to be carried on by the power of church and school life and means of instruction.

The Evangelical Arminian rests his relation to this work on "Universal Redemption," Christ having died for all in the same sense, and for the same purpose, therefore every child is regarded as in the same sense and to the same degree the subject of the Spirit's influence. The tendency of these three attitudes to this department of Church work is necessarily to lower the importance of family life, inasmuch as the family institution forms no part of the doctrinal basis on which the work rests, or by which the workers are animated.

Presbyterianism has a broader and more consistent ground of truth for her Sabbath School efforts. A specific place is given to the family in her doctrinal belief, and the believing parent or parents are recognized in that position as of the Church.

The children of such parents are regarded as born within the pale of the visible Church. On the faith