

## CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

The congregation of St. James' Square Church has long been known as one of the most intelligent and liberal minded within the Presbytery of Toronto. Its pastors have invariably been celebrated as men of high scholarly attainments and culture. While the pulpit supply has always been of the best, the psalmody department has ever received the most careful consideration and liberal support from the session and management. The present leader of praise is Dr. Norman Anderson, who discharges the duties of organist and choirmaster with a degree of skill and efficiency which must prove a source of much satisfaction to the large congregation. The choir consists of excellently trained voices although somewhat limited in number. At present there are about sixteen members in regular attendance, but this number might be doubled with advantage to the congregational singing. I have occasionally heard St. James' referred to as being, slow and conservative in matters musical, but, on my visit of last Sabbath evening I found the service of praise to be conducted in a spirit of broad mindedness and liberality second to none in the city. I could discover no trace of narrow restrictions as to hymns, organ-voluntaries, anthems or solos. The session has shown a most praise-worthy spirit of caution and liberality regarding the use of anthems in the service, by adopting the "Presbyterian Hymnal Scripture Sentences and Chants" issued by the authority of the U.P. Church of Scotland. Instead of imitating the fashions set by other denominations or relinquishing control of this particular department of praise they have adopted the above book of selections which has been compiled by a committee of the U.P. Synod and edited by Sir Henry Smart who was one of the ablest church musicians of the present century. Books, containing the words of the Sentences and Anthems are to be found in every pew, and the number and title are clearly announced from the pulpit before the anthem is sung. Every worshipper in the congregation is thus enabled to take an intelligent, though passive, part in the anthem, and join in the offering of praise rendered by the choir. Another good old Scottish Presbyterian custom prevails at St. James' which indicates much thoughtful consideration for the members of the congregation. When the Psalm, with which the service commences, is announced, the name of the tune is also announced and its number is displayed in legible characters which can be clearly read from any pew in the building. The xxviii Psalm was first announced and read by the pastor Rev. Louis H. Jordan. The reading of the verses deserves special mention. I have often been pained by the careless manner in which the sacred verses have been scrambled and jumbled until their meaning has been almost completely obscured. Here, however, one cannot fail to realize the innermost meaning of the text as every line is imbued with life and power. Mr. Jordan is a master of the elocutionary art and applies his gift to the humblest details of the service. Here, as in other churches already noticed, the tune is played over *after* the Psalm has been read, the choir and congregation rising immediately the last note is played. The choir sang well but the singing of the congregation was not quite so hearty as I could have wished. After the evening lesson had been read Scripture Sentence No. 37 was announced. This proved to be an excellent setting of "Incline Thine Ear," by Himmel which is deservedly popular with Churches of all denominations. The solo with which it opens was sung by a lady possessed of an excellent contralto voice though somewhat addicted to a rather free indulgence in *portamento*. The quartet was ren-

dered by the choir in a very pleasing manner indicative of careful study and rehearsal. The anthem occupies a distinct place of its own in the service and is not sung during the offertory. This arrangement is a desirable one. The act of worship implied in presenting the offering gains in impressiveness and dignity by being separated from the offering of praise which is thus constituted a distinct act of worship in itself. During the offertory Dr. Anderson played a quietly devotional meditation based on Dr. Dykes' well known Hymn-tune *Melita*. After the usual announcements had been made Hymn 181 was sung to *Troyte's Chant*. This is among the most beautiful of all hymns sung by Christians throughout the world. The spirit of comfort and resignation which it inspires gains an additional impressiveness from a consideration of the experience of Miss Elliott, the authoress. In a letter to her sister she writes: "Even in the vale of suffering there are blessed companions to associate with, sweet consolation to partake of, heavenly privileges to enjoy. For myself, I am well content to tread it, and to remain in it till my weary feet stand on the brink of Jordan. But I have been many years learning this difficult lesson, and even now am but little skilled in this blessed alchemy. How many hard struggles, and apparently fruitless ones, has it cost me to become resigned to this appointment of my Heavenly Father! But the struggle is now over." The death of a dear one was to her a heavy affliction, for she had always hoped that he would minister to her in her dying hours. Her meek submission under the severe chastisement is well set forth in the language of her own well-known hymns:—

What though in lonely grief I sigh  
For friends beloved no longer nigh  
Submissive still, would I reply,  
'Thy will be done.'

Though Thou hast called me to resign  
What most I prize it ne'er was mine;  
I have but yielded what was Thine,  
'Thy will be done.'

The congregation entered into the singing of this beautiful hymn with more heartiness than in any of the others. Expression marks were well observed, but the chanting was somewhat impaired by the habit of pausing in the middle of the reciting tone regardless of the verbal phrasing of each individual verse. The subject of discourse was Elisha's cursing of the people who mocked him and their destruction. The service was concluded by the singing of hymn 171 to the old Latin tune "Palistine." In reviewing the service of praise at St. James' I cannot but confess that I was somewhat disappointed with the lack of energy which the congregation displayed in that part of the service which is essentially their own. They have an efficient organist, a capable choir, familiar tunes are selected, and no attempt is made to confine the singing to the choir gallery but every effort is put forth to encourage the people to take part in the service of praise, still they do not respond as heartily as they might. The arrangement of the choir gallery may be partly responsible for this. Two rows of seats are placed close to the front of the organ, the choir is divided by the organ console in such a manner that the tenors and basses can neither see or hear each other, while their close proximity to the organ makes it impossible for the members of the choir to hear adequately the sounds which it gives forth. The authorities of St. James' would add considerably to the effectiveness of the choir in leading the congregation by concentrating their forces in front of the pulpit as has been done in Erskine, Old St. Andrew's, Bloor St. and Central Presbyterian Churches. The individual responsibility of each worshipper to prepare for taking an active part in the service of praise should not be overlooked. Congregational singing is one of the noblest heritages of the Presbyterian Church which cannot be neglected with impunity. Where every inducement is afforded to join in the praise as at St. James' the response should be hearty and spontaneous throughout the entire congregation.—TEMPO.