

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

Owing to the difficulties encountered during a long walk through the deep snow which overspread everything last Sabbath morning, I failed to reach Old St. Andrew's in time for the opening of the service. As I neared this fine old church the strains of old "Martyrdom" greeted me in a manner which was most refreshing. I cannot understand how it is that we hear so much nowadays of the tendency to crowd out the Psalms of David from the service of the Presbyterian Church. In every church which I have visited as commissioner from the "REVIEW" the foremost place in the service has been accorded to the Psalms. Pastors seem to be united in their reverence for the Psalms which have for many centuries been the medium of expressing the deepest religious feelings and experiences of the Presbyterian Church. As Sir Walter Scott contended when under the impression (which proved to be erroneous) that the General Assembly contemplated a revision of the Psalter, "they are the very words and accents of our early reformers—sung by them in woe and gratitude, in the fields, in the churches, and on the scaffold." The congregation at Old St. Andrew's is ostensibly composed of musical people. From the pew, to which I was conducted by an exceedingly courteous usher, I observed that a large proportion of the worshippers were provided with the harmonised edition of the Psalter and Hymnal, and that those who had the notes before them made good use of them as they sang. On my left there was an excellent contralto, in front a clear and resonant bass, and behind me a sweet voiced tenor. Part singing is fairly general at Old St. Andrew's. The effect produced by the simple harmonies of such a fine old tune as "Martyrdom" when sung in harmony by the large congregation was uplifting and inspiring indeed. I am aware that there are some superficially minded musicians who affect to despise this old tune. They call it antiquated, out of date, and dull. They fail to appreciate its inherent beauty of melodic form which has stamped it, with such as "French" and "Old Hundred," as classics in the school of sacred melody. "Martyrdom" is included in every collection of Psalm tunes, of any importance, which has been issued during the past sixty years. It was originally composed by a humble shoemaker named Hugh Wilson, a native of Fenwick in Ayrshire, Scotland. In addition to his humble trade he led the Psalmody in the Secession Church, and occupied his spare time in teaching the villagers the ordinary branches of education and music. He composed many psalm tunes but only two, viz., "Martyrdom" and "Caroline" have been published. On his deathbed he caused all of his manuscript tunes and poems to be destroyed—which is to be regretted, as there may have been other compositions as excellent as "Martyrdom."

The first scripture reading was from the xiii of Job, which was fully interspersed with explanatory comments delivered in Dr. Milligan's well known clear and forcible style, which was followed by hymn 189. The writer of this hymn, "O Thou by long experience tried," was Madame Guyson, who suffered afflictions almost equal to those of Job himself. Her married life was a constant series of trials. She was persecuted by her mother-in-law; her favorite child died at four years of age; she was disfigured by an attack of small-pox; and her husband died twelve years after her marriage. These calamities resulted in a deep spiritual experience which found expression in a life of benevolence and pure piety, which finally conducted her to the Bastille, owing to the persecutions of the Roman Catholic Church. Her hymns were translated into elegant English verse by the poet Cowper at the request of a friend who took this means of engaging in congenial occupation, the restless mind of the unfortunate poet. The tune "Holley" with which this beautiful hymn is associated is admirably adapted to the spirit of the words. It was sung with careful attention to ex-

pression and shading by the congregation in response to the excellent example of the precentor and choir. The 224th hymn was a fitting prelude to the sermon. The tune "Innocents," to which it is set, is well adapted to the spirit of joy and confidence which characterize the hymn. This was sung very heartily by the congregation after which Ps. xlii. 2 was announced as the text. In describing the thirst of the Psalmist for the living God, Dr. Milligan said, "The deepest thirst in man cries for God. When taken up with the superficialities of life, it is then that he fails to thirst for God. The Psalmist thirsts for a living God; not a mere fancy, but one who can feel, and think, and speak with him. In his trials he might have become rebellious, or misanthropic, but no, he thirsted for the living God. As the hart pants after the water brooks so doth the soul pant for the living God. The closet is the brook from which we draw for our recuperation and sustenance. What is faith? It is the openness of the soul Godwards. He stands at the door and knocks every time that we have a serious thought or an impulse for good. I believe in God's supremacy, but not in that way which says we are merely clay in the hands of the potter and can do nothing of ourselves. God only can supply the necessities of a being morally and spiritually constituted as man is. We come to God as a Judge instead of as a Healer. If we come to Him as a Healer, He will have mercy on us and heal us of all our infirmities. During the offertory which came after the sermon Miss Jane, organist of the church played Guilmant's transcription of an Andantino from Chauvet with the same skill and attention to details of registration and expression which marked her playing throughout the service, both in solo and accompaniment. The concluding hymn was 120, "Come ye disconsolate" which was sung to Samuel Webbe's well known tune. This is not included in the Presbyterian Hymnal, but I hope the mistake will be rectified by the committee in charge of the forthcoming new Book of Praise.

I was much impressed by the quiet and reverential manner in which the congregation was dismissed. The benediction was pronounced immediately after the concluding hymn had been sung and no organ voluntary was heard. The effect of the quietness with which each worshipper departed, communing within himself on the thoughts inspired by the impressive discourse just heard, was such as could not fail to impress the observer. It is not that the session of Old St. Andrew's object to organ music, but that it is wisely directed and controlled, and utilized where it can be made most effective in the service of praise. It has been said that "sometimes the most impressive music is no music." This is beautifully illustrated in the impressive silence which precedes the final Hallelujah in Handel's magnificent "Hallelujah Chorus." Old St. Andrew's is fortunate in the possession of a choirmaster thoroughly in sympathy with the best traditions of Presbyterian Psalmody. Mr. G. W. Grant has occupied the precentor's chair at the regular services during the past eight years. The choir is an excellent one, and the congregational singing is led with discretion and care. No anthem was sung during the service which I attended but the choir remained to rehearse the anthem for the evening service. With such excellent congregational singing as I was privileged to hear, the absence of an anthem is not appreciably felt. The impression which I received of the conduct of the service of praise at Old St. Andrew's is a very pleasant one. There are no narrow restrictions as to organ voluntaries, anthems, hymns, or solos, any of which may be used. Here we have proof that these may be utilized in the service of praise without risk of their becoming the prominent attractions, so much dreaded by those who still object to their introduction. With such cautious Scotchmen as have charge of affairs at Old St. Andrew's there need be no apprehension of misuse or abuse of any means employed in praise to Him who has said "Praise the Lord with harp; sing unto Him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings."—TEMPOR.