

POSSIBILITIES IN CONGREGATIONAL SINGING.

By Rev. Henry M. Simpson.

For the pulpit occasionally to occupy the pew is an advantage to both. Upon a Sunday morning in church recently, the singing of a devout member of the congregation across the aisle was quite noticeable. The devotion of the singer seemed equaled only by the lack of consciousness of the attention attracted. As an object-lesson it might easily have been a means of grace excelled by nothing which occurred during the hour. The event led to the reflection as to possible consequences if all the occupants of the pews had done likewise. It can scarcely be doubted that upon the preacher and people, as well as upon non-church-goers, informed of the fact, the effect would be most remarkable.

Two facts are called to mind. It is said of certain well-known preachers that they have, upon occasion, called for an immediate repetition of a hymn, when the performance had been conspicuously defective, and also whether as a result of this or not, that they preached to the largest congregations in the metropolises. While the number of the congregation is not the chief concern in preaching, yet the facts are suggestive. I recently heard a preacher, after a life-long and very comprehensive experience, say that were he to begin his ministry over again it should be his aim—next to the conversion of souls through the Word—to secure such a complete reform in the matter of congregational singing as would result in such a volume of praise from all the people present, whether technically accurate or devotionally spiritual, as would be in marked contrast to the present church habit. Phenomenal and audible use of the hymnal in church is the exception rather than the rule, notwithstanding the facts that at no time has so much attention been given in the schools to the subject of music, and at no time has the church made such large and lavish outlay to provide musical leadership and facility for the accommodation of all worshippers.

The question might arise as to what extent the service of song is optional for the church frequenter? The Book of the Psalms seems the resource of both the usual and the constant Bible reader; it cannot therefore fall of notice that its great theme is the individual song of praise to God. Listening is not worship, except it be listening to the voice of God. Much of religion is set to music. Extract the hymn of praise, and what is left of religious expression to the mass of men and women? The personal song service as a religious testimony increases in value in proportion as other experience meetings diminish. It is presumed that the regular attendants at church service anticipate heaven at some future time. None can fail to remark that a large part of heaven, as revealed in the Scripture, is associated with the song of the redeemed.

Opportunity measures responsibility. The habitual is not always the ideal. Our utmost pleases God. Only the dead cannot praise Him, according to the Divine Word.

Two scenes are brought to mind. One is the Easter service in a city church, dedicated to the worship of deaf mutes. The surpliced choir, necessarily in view of the congregation, render an anthem of praise without a syllable uttered. The swift and perfectly rhythmic motion of the fingers and hands expressed all that the hymn contained. Amid absolute silence the entire service was completed. Upon the face of each worshipper was depicted a perfect peace. It was their utmost. Instinctively the Revelator's words were recalled, "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour."

The other picture is that of a city church crowded to its utmost capacity three times a day. I attended its services once, as a boy under the ministry of the Rev. S. Y. Monroe, D.D. There was no choir. The rear gallery

was occupied by an orchestra of some dozen pieces. To me it seemed to include all but the drum, the place of which was filled by a bass viol of great power. And yet, when the volume of vocal music was uttered by that congregation, the instrumental music was out of hearing. It is not to be wondered at that such great results of a spiritual character are recorded of that church.

Just at a time when the thought of the Church is turned to extraordinary evangelistic effort, who can tell the possible result of such a method of hymn service? Some things a church cannot have, however they may be regarded as an additional source of power, but the whole-hearted and unanimous singing of the hymns of the church is within the reach of all who desire it.

Tourists who have entered the church of Mr. Spurgeon in London were accustomed to comment upon the never-to-be-forgotten singing habit of that immense assembly. Without choir and without instrumental music it was secured through the appeal of the preacher and conspicuous time-beating of a slender, frail man, who loved the voice of praise.

Is it becoming that the possible and proper use of the hymnal should be of so exceptional a character as to lead to comments such as might follow the hearing a soloist or soprano so famous and so exclusive as to make the occasion one of a life time?—N. Y. Christian Advocate.

PURITY BORNE OF KNOWLEDGE.

By Katharine A. Hamilton.

I want to urge upon every mother the sacred duty of early imparting to her children pure, reverent, scientific knowledge of the simple laws of God concerning their physical nature, its necessities, purposes and glorious possibilities. We early teach them "God is love," and point them to the cross of Christ as the highest manifestation of that love; let us not omit to tell them too that "God is light," and then, seeking for heaven-granted wisdom, unfold to their growing intelligence the marvellous story of the Creator's ways, holy and beautiful in nature as in grace.

While still of tender years, the active little brain begins to busy itself with wondering questions as to how it found its way into this strange world, and these imaginings find expression in anxious questions. At first the simple, truthful, answer—"From God, my darling," will suffice, but soon will follow other questions, and endless wonderings as to the mysterious origin of every living thing about them.

Now, dear mothers, this is your God-given opportunity. So soon as the child is of sufficient intelligence to ask such questions, so soon it is capable of receiving the pure instruction to which it has a right.

Do not seek to silence "awkward questions" by evasive answers. Be not deceived. By such a course you repel your child's confidence and open the door to two unspeakable evils. First, you lead the child to suppose that some unholy mystery must be connected with that of which you are so unwilling to speak; and secondly, it will almost certainly carry its questions to others, probably not possessed of your reticence who will teach it, impurely, the knowledge you refuse to impart.

As one who has suffered much, mentally, through just such a mistaken method, I beseech you, for the sake of the little ones so dear to your heart and to the heart of the Saviour who died for them, leave them not to be so schooled. Forestall the evil teachers who will assuredly take advantage of your laxity. Your neglect in this matter will be Satan's opportunity and he will make the most of it.

The Central Union of Women's Christian Temperance Workers passed a resolution asking that the license fee for the sale of cigarettes be increased from \$1 to \$25.

A LAWFUL CRIME.

R. S. H. in Philadelphia Westminster.

Drunkness is a crime. Against the man himself who is its victim, against the family which is dependent upon him, against the society which his example contaminates, against the State to which he should be an ornament and a factor contributing to its wealth and power. This is a rather sharp indictment, but every count of it will hold. And yet this crime is a lawful thing. The State says it is. Drunkness is made by the use of alcoholic drink. No one who does not drink alcohol ever becomes a drunkard. We never hear of a man or woman the victim of this fearful vice who had never tasted alcohol. There are no potato drunkards, no beefsteak drunkards, no cold water drunkards. Alcohol is back of and responsible for the whole iniquity. And the State says alcohol may be sold, shall be sold. The State regulates the method by which it shall be sold. If a required number of freeholders will sign a petition certifying as to the good moral character of the man who is used to engage in his nefarious product, the Judge of the court is expected to, and ordinarily does, issue the license which permits this good man to debauch his fellow-men, and turn them into criminals against every institution which means the steadfastness of society. So drunkness is a lawful crime.

It is pitiful that such a condition of things should exist in this good country of ours. It is lamentable that men laugh at the performances of intoxicated men, apologize for the evil, excuse it in various ways, and themselves play from time to time their own little game with this "liquid fire." It is unfortunate that so many men are what are commonly called "cranks," men who are honest in their opposition of this evil, who want to see its power broken, and common humanity saved from the wreck which it inflicts wherever it has opportunity. It is strange that men cannot see eye to eye and work hand to hand, in some sane, as we say to curb the power of the drink demon.

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Drunkness is a crime. Liquor is a curse. Liquor makes drunkness. The State makes the sale of liquor possible. The State, therefore, makes drunkness lawful. And the work of ruin goes on unchecked. What a position for a nation that calls itself Christian to hold before the world. We do not wonder that the South, realizing how dangerous the negro may be under the influence of alcoholic drink, rushes almost unanimously along the highway which bears the name "Local Option."

I have not a shadow of doubt that if all our eyes could be opened today, we should see our homes, and our places of business, and the streets we traverse, filled with the "chariots of God." There is no need for any one of us to wait for lack of chariots. That cross in front of your household who has hitherto made life a burden to you, and who has been the Juggernaut car to crush your soul into the dust, may henceforth be a glorious chariot to carry you to the heights of heavenly patience and long-suffering. That misunderstanding, that mortification, that unkindness, that disappointment, that loss, that defeat—all these are chariots waiting to carry you to the very heights of victory you have so longed to reach. Mount into them, then, with thankful hearts and lose sight of all second causes in the shining of his love who will carry you in his arms and triumphantly over it all.—H. W. Smith.

Purity and integrity command the respect even of a mob. "Listen, citizens! It is sixty years of a pure life that is about to save you," was the way Lamartine introduced De la Euro to a French mob. The attention given by the crowd was its tribute to worth.