

"ABOUT CHURCH MUSIC."

BY SPERO MELIORA. — *Concluded.*

In this question of church music, the subject of hymns is so inseparably connected with that of tunes that it is almost impossible to treat the one without making mention of the other; just a few words therefore are necessary.

Every one who has given any attention to this part of the subject must have been struck with the difference between the Congregational Hymn Book and other collections, such as "Church Hymns," "Hymns Ancient and Modern," "The Hymnary," etc.; for, setting aside the High Church tendency of some of them, they certainly have the great advantage of being emotional and expressive rather than "didactic and expository," and so are calculated to take a firmer hold upon the people who sing them. The "Hymns Ancient and Modern" have been sold by thousands. The "New Congregational Hymn Book" was greatly deficient in this respect, and the supplement has been published in a great measure to remedy the defect. But why is it not more commonly used? Some churches are slow to adopt it. But there is comfort in the reflection that the old books are gradually wearing out and new ones cannot be bought without the supplement. The collection now comprises thirteen hundred hymns, and it may be remarked in passing, that several hundreds might be weeded out, greatly to the improvement of the book both in size and quality, and still leave an ample supply for all reasonable purposes.

But in singing hymns, one most important point is too generally lost sight of, that is, the varying expression of nearly every hymn which has any soul at all in it. It is sometimes spoken of as a difficulty in selecting the tune, that the hymn expresses different states of feeling in different verses, or even in different lines. This difficulty arises usually from forgetfulness of the fact that the hymn should guide the musical expression, and not be made to fit into a kind of procrustean bed of a tune, to be sung through in a cast-iron sort of a way. Let there be no misunderstanding here. Far be it from us to give license to any violation of time and tune, but the expression may and ought to be varied to suit the words. But what is the usual practice? A tune of the proper metre is chosen, and it is, in general character, appropriate, then comes the error of doing more or less violence to the sentiments of the hymn, by forcing its varied expression into uniformity with the "expression marks" of the tune, when there are any, and so we too frequently hear verse after verse sung with the same strength of voice throughout.

For the purpose of studying the meaning and various feelings of the hymns, if for no other reason, congregations ought to meet for practice. In the "Hymnary," and the new editions of "Hymns Ancient and Modern," every change is indicated by the usual musical expression marks or initials being printed, not in the tune, but in the hymn, wherever such change occurs. Mr. Curwen, in the larger edition of his "Child's Own Hymn Book," arrives at the same result by varying the type. Nothing would more conduce to the enjoyment of Congregational singing and its rapid development than an energetic reform in this one matter. That it can be done is capable of abundant proof, but space forbids.

This musical question is a wide one. And nothing has been said in this article about minister, organ or choir; all of these being intimately connected with the subject.

Another subject growing out of this one, is the question of "Responsive Reading," and the order of Congregational services generally. A subject which claims, and which it is to be hoped will in due time receive, the attention it deserves in the columns of the CANADIAN INDEPENDENT.

PROTESTANT missionaries in China, of all denominations, American and European (male and female), number about 450. Of these, over 100 are from thirteen different American societies. There is estimated to be only one female missionary to 800,000 Chinese women; yet women's boards of missions are crowding forward their work with all the means at their command.

ZECHARIAH AND MALACHI.

ZECHARIAH.

These, with Haggai, constitute the prophets of the restoration, *i.e.*, those who discharged their office after the return from Babylon. The most important of them is Zechariah. Of his personal history little is known. While yet a young man he came up from Babylon with his grandfather Iddo (Neh. xii. 16), one of "the priests, the chief of the fathers," who accompanied Zerubbabel the leader of the first colony of returning exiles, 536 B.C. Zechariah was therefore, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, a priest as well as a prophet, but also like them obtained his chief distinction in the latter office. His first recorded utterance is dated in the eighth month of the second year of Darius, two months after the first address of Haggai. The two prophets, therefore, were contemporary, and as we learn from Ezra v. 1, acted in concert so far as concerned their first object—the rebuilding of the temple. In this Haggai led the way, and then left the work to the younger man, who, however, by no means confined his prophetic activity to this narrow scope.

This book consists of two parts, widely distinguished from each other. The first (chaps. 1-8) has its separate portions dated, and applies immediately to the circumstances of those to whom it was delivered; the second (chaps. 9-14) bears no date, and was probably delivered long after what precedes it. It appears to be a general outlook upon the future, reaching even to the time of the end.

The first part is distinguished by a series of symbolical visions, all given in the course of one night and all closely connected together. The first one represents a horseman in a lowly valley, who receives reports from other horsemen as to the result of their mission through the earth, and learning that all things there are peaceful while the chosen people are still in a sad state, begins to intercede for them. The prophet announces that this intercession is successful. The second vision shows four fierce horns, emblems of strength and violence, confronted by four carpenters or smiths, able to beat them down; thus indicating that the friends of Zion are as numerous as her foes and that for every evil there is a remedy. The third vision (ii. 1-13), by the symbol of a man with a measuring line in his hand, shows that the despoiling of the nations is to secure the enlargement as well as the defence of the people by the indwelling of their covenant Lord. The fourth vision exhibits the forgiveness of sin, which had been the cause of all the previous troubles. The high priest is seen standing before God in filthy garb and accused by Satan; whereupon Satan is rebuked, and the filthy garments are replaced by festal raiment and a spotless mitre in token that iniquity is freely forgiven. The necessary counterpart to this is set forth in the fifth vision (iv. 1-14), representing the church as a golden candlestick whose lamps are filled with oil from living trees on either hand, so that she is not only justified, but sanctified by divine grace. The next vision, that of the flying roll filled with curses against transgressors, guarded the preceding from misapprehension, as if there were impunity for the impenitent. The seventh, that of the woman crushed into a measure and carried to Shinar, enforces the same point by suggesting another and yet longer exile. The eighth vision returns to the point of beginning, and by its chariots of war indicates the fulfilment of what there was pledged. The symbolical action which follows, *viz.*, the crowning of the high priest with crowns made from gold and silver brought from Babylon, represented the consecration of the nations with their wealth to the Messiah.

The foregoing visions and symbols exerted a happy influence in stimulating the restored exiles in rebuilding the temple. The two following chapters give the prophet's answer to the question whether it was needful to continue the fasts commemorating the steps of Jerusalem's overthrow. The prophet, after rebuking the formalism which suggested the inquiry, announces a period of great prosperity, declares that the fasts shall become festivals, and then predicts the conversion of the nations.

The second part of the book looks forward to the future. Chapter ix. describes the conquests of Alexander, foretells the Messiah's kingdom, and then returns to set forth the victory of the covenant people over the Seleucids. Chapter x. continues the prediction of blessings. Chapter xi., in a mysterious form, sets forth the rejection of the good Shepherd by those whom He would fain guide and deliver. The next chapter describes under the forms of the Old Dispensation the struggle and victory of the early church (vs. 1-9), and then the repentance and faith which are the inward conditions of this struggle. Then follows, in chapter xiii., a vivid description of the fruits of penitence, winding up with a picture of the suffering Messiah. The last chapter sets forth the final conflict and triumph of God's kingdom.

The book is, in many respects, difficult of exact interpretation, but its whole tone is edifying and consolatory. Its predictions of the Messiah are clear and striking—first, as Jehovah's lowly servant, the Branch (iii. 8); then, that servant as priest and king building the temple (vi. 12, 13); thirdly, as a peaceful but universal monarch (ix. 9, 10); fourthly, a shepherd, scorned and betrayed for a mean price (xi. 12, 13); fifthly, His pierced form a means of conversion (xii. 10); and lastly, the fellow of Jehovah smitten by Jehovah himself (xiii. 7). Its references to the ultimate diffusion of the truth, far beyond the limits of the historic Israel, are frequent and animated. See ii. 11; vi. 15; viii. 20-23; ix. 10, and especially the vivid and picturesque description in xiv. 16-21, where the conversion of the nations is set forth under the figure of a universal pilgrimage to keep the feast of tabernacles, and even the bells on the horses bear the same motto which once flashed from the diadem of the high priest—"HOLINESS TO THE LORD."

MALACHI.

Nearly a century had passed after Zechariah when the last prophet of the Old Testament appeared. He appears to have been a cotemporary of Nehemiah, and encountered some of the same difficulties which called out the energy of that upright ruler. The Jews had been cured by the exile of their proneness to idolatry, but while firmly adhering to the ancestral faith, were led into the error of formalism. And not finding the brilliant predictions of the earlier prophets fulfilled in their experience, fell into an ungrateful, murmuring spirit, and questioned the existence or the fairness of God's providential government. They had relapsed also into the old sin of marrying heathen wives, which Ezra had sternly rebuked nearly fifty years before. It is not surprising, therefore, that the tone of Malachi is stern and threatening; yet, as usual, in the Old Testament the severest denunciations of judgment are relieved by glowing references to the great deliverance to come. Thus we are told (i. 11) of a day when from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, God's name shall be great among the nations, and that not merely in Jerusalem, but in every place, incense and a pure offering shall be offered to that name. Again, it is expressly said (iii. 1-4) that the Lord's messenger shall come to prepare His way, and after him the Lord himself, even the angel of the covenant; and though he shall be like a refiner's fire and a fuller's soap, yet the issue of his purifying process shall be the acceptance of the people and their services, just as in the best days of old. And the pledge of this is the fact that the Lord changes not.

Of a like character is the precious promise (iii. 10) that the punctual payment of the tithes would secure a blessing so large as to surpass their room to receive; the assurance (iii. 17) that they, who, amid gloom and discouragement, fear God and think upon His name, are His peculiar treasure, whom He guards as one does a loving and obedient child; and finally, that upon them, even in the great and dreadful day of the Lord, the Sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in His wings.

The book, as a whole, is a fitting close to the Old Testament. It resumes the ethical tone of Moses and Elijah, holds fast ritual and righteousness at once, vindicates the ways of Providence in the present, and