

can never be confirmed enough." Blackwood improves as the months go by, apparently "putting on a spurt" as occasion requires (while keeping in the "old track" all the time), in order to keep the younger competitors in sight—withal giving us a draft of rich old wine, flavoured with new essences, "to taste." Twenty pages are given to an appreciative retrospect over "Fifty years (1842 to 1892) of Conservative influence." The very quiet but interesting story "Chronicles of Westery" comes to its conclusion, very nicely and properly, in this number. The several articles, on "Music," and other subjects, are particularly solid reading.

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. ANDREW'S CONVENTION.

The Council have issued the final programme in very neat form. It is substantially as printed in our last issue, and promises several magnificent public services and meetings.

The Hospitality Committee report that the success of the Convention as regards delegates from outside of Toronto is assured.

They had reports of over one hundred up to Friday last, and this number will probably be increased to one hundred and fifty before the Convention opens, whilst the Toronto clergy and Chapters will add at least as many more, ensuring Church meetings of no ordinary character.

New badges have been procured for both the visiting and the city delegates, and luncheon will be provided through the kindness of the Woman's Auxiliary of Toronto in St. James' School-house, on both the Friday and Saturday of the Convention, thus saving the delegates no little expense and giving the best possible opportunity for further fraternal intercourse.

SUNDAY SCHOOL HYMNS.

BY J. W. CONNOR, ESQ., M.A., PRINCIPAL OF BERLIN HIGH SCHOOL.

A paper read at the Ruri-decanal Church Workers and Sunday-school Convention, of the County of Waterloo, held in St. John's Church, Preston, Ont., Feb. 2nd, 1892.

It would hardly be proper before so intelligent an audience as this to quote the words of the man who, "provided he were allowed to write the ballads of a nation, cared not who made its laws," but it would be a very convenient introduction to this paper. For it is hard to overestimate the influence on many people of the hymns they have sung and learned in childhood. Poetry is addressed to that side of the mind which chiefly shapes our ideals in life, and though we fall miserably short of our ideals, yet without ideals, and high ones too, we should be like Bunyan's "man with the muck rake."

Moreover, the frequent repetition of the same hymns, acting together with the power of metre and rhyme to stamp impressions deep on the memory, causes snatches of hymns, or even whole hymns, to abide in the mind long after lessons, impressed with the greatest care, have faded out. How important then that what has so powerful and abiding an effect should be wisely chosen.

It will therefore be not unprofitable to consider what may detract from the usefulness of hymns in our Sunday schools, and to consider what is the kind of hymns likely to do most good, and how the greatest possible benefit may be derived from them.

What may detract from the usefulness of a hymn for Sunday school purposes? First and least important, but still worthy of consideration, is any defect in its literary form. Now-a-days, when popular instruction is almost universal, it would be an injury to the cause of religion to present the truths of revelation in such a form that any of our scholars should be led, from disgust of the language of hymns he had used in childhood, to feel contempt for their teaching. Although the hymn book that contained this dull stanza—

"When Jonah sank beneath the wave
He thought to rise no more,
But God prepared a fish to save
And bear him to the shore,"

—is, I think, pretty well out of use—none too soon—yet there are lines almost as prosaic in "Moody & Sankey," and some approaching these in the Hymnal Companion and in almost every collection ever made.

Even inattention to consistency in the use of figurative language causes a distraction of mind to all who perceive it. I could quote a flagrant instance, but I forbear, as the rest of the hymn is good and devout. But there is no need to use any hymns suspicious in point of taste—there are hundreds of good ones.

A more serious defect is either teaching or implying false doctrine. Thus is not the rhyme—it can hardly be called a hymn—"I want to be an Angel" largely responsible for the notion so common that "good people, when they die, become angels"? Yet what an inspiring thought that there is in

A song that even Angels
Can never, never sing.

"To Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood!"

Again is there not very incorrect teaching in a popular hymn, "O Paradise, O Paradise," in these words:

"I want to be as pure on earth
As on thy spotless shore."

Asking for what we do not expect to receive. And we may see a striking example of the way a great truth is perverted by exaggeration and losing sight of correlative truths, in

"Cast your deadly doing down,
Down at Jesus' feet,"

when contrasted with

"In every time of need,
Before the judgment throne,
Thy work, O Lamb of God, I'll plead,
Thy merits, not my own.
Yet work, O Lord, in me
As Thou for me hast wrought,
And let my love the answer be
To grace Thy love has wrought."

Not less important is the effect on a child's ideals of the hymns which by frequent use are held up as standards to him. For example, a hymn that I still remember, has the words:

"Nothing is worth a thought below
But how I may escape the woe
That never, never dies";

which certainly, taken in their natural meaning, inculcate spiritual selfishness. It is well that our hymn books are pretty free from such passages; but there is what is at least a very unfortunate expression in the hymn "O Lord of Heav'n and earth and sea," that is to say,

"Whatever Lord we give to thee
Repaid a thousand fold will be,
Then gladly will we give to thee."

And is there not an approach to irreverent familiarity in

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast."

Let us remember our Lord's rebuke even to such a saint as Mary Magdalene, "Touch Me not," or rather, "Be not clinging to Me."

But the great danger to be shunned is unreality, the bane of our religion, that which infests our services, even the most solemn. Now, may not this be very largely fostered by giving hymns containing language appropriate only to advanced Christians to be sung by Sunday-school children—babes in Christ? Take for example:

"Like some bright dream that comes unsought,
When slumbers o'er me roll;
Thy image ever fills my thought
And charms my ravished soul."

Now either these words are sung without realizing their meaning, or an injury is done to the child's conscience, which tells that they are not true as far as he is concerned.

The same may be said of nearly all "experience hymns." What, for example, is there in the experience of a healthy-minded child to correspond to Cowper's lines:

"What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still;
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill."

No doubt these and such hymns are very proper for use by individuals, but they are quite unsuited to the average Sunday-schooler.

Enough, perhaps, of objections, you may say. What kind of hymns are free from the drawbacks referred to? To find an answer, let us study carefully the Canticles in our Prayer Book. There we see that the prominent subject is not human feelings, but God's goodness, especially in redemption. If Mary's spirit hath rejoiced in God, her feeling is quickly passed over to dwell on how "He hath shewed strength with His arm—hath filled the hungry with good things;" and if Simeon says "Nunc dimittis," it is because his eyes have seen "the light to lighten the Gentiles"—and the song of Zacharias is full not of his own feelings, but of the "Dayspring from on high that hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

There will be much less danger of reality in the case of hymns that dwell on God's greatness and goodness, especially if the children are properly questioned by their teachers or the superintendent on the subject-matter of the hymns. This will be easier if hymns are chosen with a view to the season

of the Church year, so that teaching and singing may converge on the same point. Again hymns of the type of "Rock of Ages," "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," are suited to all ages and conditions. Another advantage of such hymns is that they are generally such as can easily be explained to young children, so as to be understood fairly well, while, unlike some of the hymns for children, they are not so childish in language as to disgust the older scholars. (One or two points may yet be noted. Should not the Church hymn-book, not some collection of revival hymns or gospel hymns, be used? We are trying to train the children to take part intelligently and feelingly in the Church's services; then should we not train them to use the very hymns that are likely to be used in church? Again, where else can we find hymns suited to the Church seasons? For the same reason, while tunes are chosen that appeal to the tastes of children, these should be taken from those that are in use in the congregation. This will perhaps make children more inclined to attend Divine service. Again there is one great objection to the tunes used in connection with gospel hymns and the like, they lend themselves so readily to profaneness. This more than compensates for any additional readiness with which children learn them. What thoughtful person has not been shocked at the way boys and girls sing in sport hymns in which the holiest names occur? But experience shows that children can be taught to sing good solid tunes, and sing them heartily, as I remember was done (not by myself) in our Berlin Sunday school years ago, when "Moody and Sankey" was discarded. Here, however, I would venture a hint. Don't let the organist choose the hymns. Let her choose the tunes if you like, but be sure the words are suited to the children's needs. It is not at all necessary that the words to which any desirable tune may be set should be used; there are generally plenty of good hymns in the same metre; anyway the singing is not to please the children, but to improve them and to glorify God. You have no doubt heard the legend of the monastery in which the singing was very devout, but unscientific, till it was visited by a stranger with a magnificent voice, and how the singing improved, but how discussions crept in, so that the prior had a vision in which an angel asked him why their sweet singing was no more heard in heaven. Let us keep in mind the moral.

In conclusion let me briefly sum up the preceding desultory remarks.

(1) There is no need to use in Sunday school hymns that are weak in style, or can be interpreted in favour of any error in doctrine or practice; for there are far more hymns that are unobjectionable than we can ever use.

(2) We should shun any containing language bordering upon irreverence, or likely to foster unreality, and should cultivate the habit of putting ourself in the place of the children.

(3) Narrative hymns and those that either praise God for His mercy or call upon Him, can by judicious teaching be made a most valuable means of spiritual training.

(4) Both hymns and tunes should be so chosen as to make good Churchmen and Churchwomen, that is, sober minded but devout Christians, believing and living all the truths of the faith once delivered to the saints.

Home & Foreign Church News

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS.

QUEBEC.

SHERBROOKE, P. Q.—One of the subjects discussed at the annual meeting of the deanery of St. Francis held on Dec. 9th last, was the formation of a guild of Church choirs for the deanery. The subject was referred to a committee, which decided that the subject was not quite ripe for determinate action, but which recommended that the gentleman who had brought the matter forward, Mr. Arthur Dorey, organist of St. Peter's, Sherbrooke, should be encouraged to organise a festival service, obtaining the assistance of as many choirs as possible in the service. This was to be looked upon as an experiment. With this encouragement, Mr. Dorey, with the sanction of Canon Thorneloe, arranged to hold a festival service, which took place on Wednesday, Jan. 27th, in St. Peter's Church; about seventy voices took part, the choirs represented being St. Peter's, Sherbrooke; St. George's, Lennoxville; Bishop's College, Lennoxville; Richmond, Cookshire, Magog, Compton, and others. The clergy present were surprised; those present were Revs. Canon Thorneloe and R. Fothergill (Sherbrooke), Principal Adams, Dr. Allnatt, Prof. Watkins, N. P. Yates (Bishop's Coll., Lennoxville), G. H. Partee (Compton), J. Hepburn and T. Rudd (Richmond and Melbourne), J. C. Cox (Windsor), R. Tambs (Magog), A. H. Robertson (Cookshire), H. E. Wright (Angus). The service was choral: First part intoned by Canon Thorneloe, second part by

Prof. Allnatt H. E. Wright the combining character.

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