



The Literary and Social Department

Learning for Life



The Singing Spinsters

The soprano and the contralto of a Boston choir set off together for a week in the woods of Maine. "Two singing spinsters" they called themselves, with a week of their vacation solemnly set apart to idleness.

"Let us find the loneliest place on this hemisphere," suggested the contralto.

"A place where there are no pianos or rehearsals or da capos, and where life is the reverse of 'one grand sweet song,'" added the soprano.

"And where not even the birds sing," concluded the contralto.

They found the place, save only that the birds were there, and their songs were welcome.

Sunday came, and the singers found themselves inquiring if there were a service near. There was one two miles away, the landlady said; a little meeting-house, with a preacher who was also a farmer, and preached elsewhere in the morning and here in the afternoon.

Thither they took their way through the woods. They found the walk more hot and wearisome than they had expected. They were tired when they reached the little meeting-house. But the service did not begin. The people were assembled, and the minister was there, but they waited while the one vehicle hitched outside drove away, and returned after three-quarters of an hour with a crippled little old melodeon.

"We hear that you are singers," said the minister, "and our people would like to hear you."

The two women were surprised indeed. They had not suspected that she had delay was on their account, or that their vocation was known to any of the people. But when they saw with what labor the little melodeon had been brought, they consented to sing.

The soprano had to expend so much labor upon the instrument that she had little breath for singing, and the contralto was tired and not in her best voice. Moreover, the selections were not such as the audience as a whole approved. One old woman, barely turning her head after an upward run of the soprano, whispered to her next neighbor, "Screech!" The others listened stolidly. The minister tried to look edified. But one number brought something like a response. It was Marston's arrangement of "I'm a Pilgrim."

After the service the minister thanked the singers, and the people made respectful way for them to nest out, a few going so far as to say, "Glad you came," or "Hope you'll come again."

A year afterward, at a religious convention, the pastor of a Boston church met a plain little minister from Maine, who told him how two of the city preacher's singers had sung for him one Sunday during the summer.

"Some of the people thought the music a little too fancy," he said, "but it gave them some new ideas about music, and we need a few new ideas up our way. And it did us good that they were willing to help us—coming so far that hot afternoon and singing for a little handful of people. And I must not forget to tell you that one old lady, who at first did not like the singing, can never get done telling about the song, 'I'm a Pilgrim.' She says it will comfort her when

she is dying if she can recall, not the melody, which she has forgotten, but the thrill she felt at the words:

"There is no sorrow, nor any sighing,
Nor any sin there, nor any dying."

The Boston minister told his singers, and the two "spinsters" said, "It was worth the walk, after all."—*Youth's Companion*.



The Most Interesting Book in the World

BY BISHOP QUAYLE.

Genesis contains the history of Abraham, who is one of the great personalities of all time, and the beginnings of the Jew, who is the miracle among nationalities. The beginnings of peoples as nations is in the tenth of Genesis. The Pentateuch contains that strange, great spirit, Moses, whose biography has always challenged the thoughtful wonder of the world. Joshua is a battle programme fitted to stand beside Caesar's Commentaries; and to my reading, it is by long degrees more fascinating. There is no battle history like it. Battles and marches sound through it from prologue to epilogue. The Book of Ruth is a pastoral sweet as "The Vicar of Wakefield" or "Lorna Doone." The story of David is by every test more interesting than the "Odyssey." David thrills us as Ulysses knows not how to do. Isaiah is lordly like Milton and beyond him. His harp makes music unapproachable for grandeur. Even dainty-fingered Matthew Arnold allowed this, and set literature journeying through this book. "Jeremiah is tender as Mrs. Browning's 'The Cry of the Children,' and full of heartache as 'In Memoriam.' Ezekiel is imaginative as Dante and beyond him. Jonah is the broadest catholicity emanating from a book written so long ago. The four Gospels are each biographies, which for compression, lucidity, fineness of touch, vividness of portraiture, naturalness and ease of style, the absence of explanation or exclamation in the face of shoreless wonders, make all biographies appear weak. "The Gospel of John" is a solitary among the books of earth and the first fourteen verses are

the sublimest strain of equal length to any literature. Paul's "Epistle to the Romans" is revolutionary as no book you can call to mind, and his "Philimon" is a more touching and beautiful tribute to friendship than Cicero's "De Amicitia." "Revelation" is a splendid enough to put all the sky in conflagration.

Beside this the New Testament contains the vestiges of the greatest figure born of the Jewish race—Paul of Tarsus, whose stature the centuries do nothing other than increase. The Corinthian chapter on Love is companion to the Corinthian chapter on Resurrection, and the two are bereft of any companions always. You cannot approach them in theme or treatment. Paul's eloquence is beyond all others, because his theme outtops all themes whatsoever, "as the heavens are higher than the earth." The introductory chapter to Philippians is an evangel glorious enough to make daylight of the darkest night.

Christ is in the Bible. The Old Testament looked toward Him; and the New Testament looks Him full in the face. His words have swept the clouds from out the sky, so that we see the far and shining sea, and His doctrines have changed the history of the world, and His doings have taught the centuries to love each other, and He walked calmly down into the grave to kill the king of death, and "having taken captivity captive, and having given gifts unto men," He as calmly walked up through the spring-time sky and sat down "far above all principality and power, and holds a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth;" and of whose heaven it is said that there is no night there, because the Lamb is the light thereof.

And this amazing story of this amazing Christ is told in the Bible; so that, for His sake alone, it is unapproachable for interest among the volumes of the world.—*From "Books and Life."*

League Novelties

BY MAUD B. LITTLE.

Have you changed your programme of late? If you find your League is becoming uninteresting, try a new plan. Here are some which perhaps you have not tried:

Have a young people's chorus, to sing when and where needed.

Appoint a member of the lookout committee for each ward to look after strangers, visitors and absent members during the week.

Appoint a Leaguer to look after the song-books, keeping them in good order.

Let each member covenant to devote twenty or thirty minutes of each day to the League. It may be in study, prayer, visiting, or writing letters, etc.—any way which is most helpful.

Have some meeting without a leader. Give out the subject a week or two previous, requesting all to study the topic thoroughly, as they may be called upon. The first vice-president, or someone appointed by him, has the programme written upon the blackboard with names of participants. This will prove interesting and helpful, if each will do his best readily.

Appoint a Leaguer occasionally to take notes on the sermon. These he may read at any meeting of the League—devotional, business, social or literary.

Appoint a different Leaguer oftentimes to conduct a song service before the regular devotional meeting. Perhaps the pastor would be glad of their assistance.

Have a song roll for visitors. Visit them and get their names, and perhaps

"Read the Bible more even if you read about it less."