

CHOIRS should remember that next to the minister they have the most important office in the Church. It is their duty to lead the praises of the congregation. Their behavior should be reverent, all conversation or moving about should be avoided.

NOTES ON THE OCCASIONAL SERVICES.

No. III.

SOLEMNIZATION OF MATRIMONY.

(Concluded).

IN our last article we ended with the first blessing, which concludes properly the marriage covenant. On any occasion when the ceremony is performed in a house or chamber than the Church, the service concludes at this point. In the Church this first part of the ceremony is performed "in the body of the Church," generally at the entrance to the choir. Before the Reformation it was performed at the door of the Church, and we have occasionally witnessed it there ourselves. The second part of the Service to which we now draw attention is to be celebrated "before the Lord's Table." The design of this addition is to impress the religious covenant more deeply on the minds of the contracting parties by hymns, prayers and exhortations. Joy is a natural attendant on Christian marriage entered into in the fear of God. The Church of Christ never frowns on innocent amusement or joy on proper occasions. In this case she bids her children rejoice in the words of the 128th or the 67th Psalm. Either of these is very suitable. Luther says of the first:

"To this Psalm we will give the title of an Epithalamium or Marriage song. In it the prophet cheereth those that are married, wishing unto them, and promising unto them from God, all manner of blessings." The latter being a prayer for blessing is also appropriate. Then follow supplications and prayers, that all present may join in shewing their regard for the newly-married couple. The first prayer is for spiritual blessings, the second for the temporal blessing of children, the third for the performance of the mutual duties of love and fidelity. Then follows the blessing. After which, if there be no Sermon, a statement of the duties of both parties is made, drawn from the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter.

In many places in England it is the custom in place of this statement to make a short address, as was the case lately at the marriages of the Metropolitan of South Africa and the Bishop of Manchester. Notice the concluding Rubric: "It is convenient that the new-married persons should receive the Holy Communion at the time of their marriage, or the first opportunity after their marriage." This, if approached in the right spirit, will confirm their vow to each other, and bind their mutual promises. God's blessing may be expected on their union begun in this fear and in obedience to His laws. "I know not," says Tertullian, "which way I should be able to show the happiness of that wedlock, the knot whereof the Church doth fasten, and the Sacrament of the Church confirm."

A GOOD cause is more injured by a weak defence, than by a strong attack.