

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

THE BIBLE AND MUSIC.

By Rev. R. G. MacBeth, M.A.

Atheism has no music of its own, and the cheerless halls of infidelity never echo the sound of song. Perhaps it is because of this that we instinctively shrink from the man who deifies music. In any case the dictum of our greatest poet appeals to most of us when he says:

The man who hath no music in himself
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils,

The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus,
Let no such man be trusted.

There are many who think Shakespeare to be too strong in this famous piece of invective, but we all understand that there is in ourselves a willingness to trust one who hums and sings at his work and an unwillingness to company with the person whose "savage breast" refuses to be soothed by music's peerless charm.

Atheism has no songs because it denies God, and therefore has no reason or capacity for music. The nerves of the higher sense have been atrophied and the capacity for the exhilaration of song has been chloroformed by unbelief. Hence the fearful silence and the chill despair of her temples. But religion is the very mother of music and her abodes are ever resonant with singing. Religion is the reflection of heaven in the soul, and heaven is a continuous roll of symphony. Where there is unalloyed and unswelled joy the heart flows over in music and it is easier to sweep back the ocean tide than to repress that swelling wave of song.

The Bible abounds with the idea of music till the reader feels the whole atmosphere tremulous with notes of exultant gladness. There are songs of triumph as when Miriam leads the thanksgiving of the host delivered from the pursuing Egyptians. There are songs of soothing tenderness as when David touches the harpstrings and lifts the shadows from the heavy spirit of Saul. And there are wonderful battle-songs which fall upon the ear like the roar of a wintry sea. Every instrument known in that day was pressed into the service of expressing emotion, and one can feel the quivering of Judean hills under the rhythm of the great Processional chanted at the opening of Solomon's temple.

It is little wonder then that the world's great musicians have caught their divine afflatus from the Bible. The simple wooing of the Gospel hymn and the mighty splendor of oratorio take their rise in the heart of the matchless Book and like a purling stream or a rushing river gladden and inspire the lives of men. The composers who arouse the noblest passions and the singers who charm the cares of this weary world away are those who lean upon the bosom of God till his heart-beat answers theirs. Then and only then can they thrill the world. Without that they are but artificial parrots imitating each other in conventional and soulless correctness. From the Bible alone there speaks forth the nightingale, which shall not cease its flight till the heaviest-burdened wayfarer who has been cheered by its singing lays down his load and enters the rest that remains for the people of God.

Paris, Ont.

To relieve a minister of minor tasks, which properly belong to the congregation, is to have a share in his larger spiritual service.

THE JAMES ROBERTSON MEMORIAL FUND.

By Rev. George Bryce, D.D.

The General Assembly at its late meeting in Hamilton, on the request of the Assembly's Home Mission Committee, took up the consideration of the "James Robertson Memorial Fund." It was stated that some \$4,300 had come in from various sources to this fund. Addresses of warm appreciation of the memory and work of the late superintendent of missions were followed by an unanimous and hearty vote of the General Assembly to raise at least \$20,000. The matter was referred to a committee. This committee brought in a finding which was cordially adopted by the General Assembly. It ordered that the sum spoken of be raised to support a lectureship on missions, which will require the lecturer appointed annually to deliver a course of lectures in the six colleges of the church, to the students of these colleges. The Assembly also divided the church into three districts and instructed the committee to raise before next Assembly the sum of \$5,500 in each district.

These districts are:

1. The Western Synods of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Convener, Rev. Dr. Bryce.

2. The Synods of Toronto and Kingston and Hamilton and London. Convener, Rev. Dr. Somerville, with the assistance of Dr. R. D. Fraser.

3. The Synods of Montreal and Ottawa and the Maritime Provinces. Convener, Dr. Armstrong, with the assistance of Mr. Robert Birks of Montreal and Dr. Robert Murray of Halifax.

To the convener it is a congenial duty to carry out the heartily expressed injunction of the Assembly. He was for forty years a personal friend of Dr. Robertson and for nearly thirty years a Home Mission associate and co-worker in the upbuilding of the Canadian West.

It is an inspiring thought that in remembering Dr. Robertson we may "perpetuate and strengthen the missionary spirit which burned in the breast of the great missionary leader of Western Canada.

The writer remembers James Robertson as a student of the same year in Toronto University and as being in the Fenian fight at Ridgeway, when three men were killed and four were wounded in the University company. Again, he remembers him, with others, standing at the threshold of the western provinces, taking a large part in the founding of Winnipeg and in laying the foundations of our beloved Church.

It was a privilege during three decades to counsel with him in more than a thousand meetings, in numerous mission journeys, church openings, communions and church courts.

Dr. Robertson's greatest fame was gained in the last twenty years of his life as the first superintendent. In his devotion to and skillful management of this work he steadily grew and became the Boanerges of exploratory and foundation work in the missionary cause. In his last decade of life he became a missionary statesman, whose opinion commanded highest respect and whose story of incident and mission adventure was equally agreeable to the city audience or the rural congregation. While Presbyterianism is the strongest force in the towns and cities of Western Canada, yet it is especially strong among the farmers of the West. Dr. Robertson knew as no one else the workings of the farmer's mind and how to appeal to his motives. The superintendent's visits to the East were especially notable. His manly, simple, detailed appeals were also acceptable to the business men and wealthier classes of the Eastern provinces from

Toronto and Montreal to Halifax and St. John, while his visit to Scotland left impressions of the deepest kind on the minds of numbers still living in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. The Assembly honors itself, the Master's cause, and our whole Canadian civilization in determining to raise a fitting memorial to the late superintendent.

Ralph Connor, a devoted friend, an ardent admirer and a worthy co-worker of Dr. Robertson, has embalmed the memory of his friend in that memorable work that gives many details of the great superintendent's life.

Now the Assembly desires in raising this memorial to make the spirit of this man live again and grow from more to more in the consciousness of the Church and especially of the college students, who are to be the religious leaders of the future.

To establish an annual lecture course in the six colleges of the Church is no small task, but it is worth doing and worth doing speedily. The understanding of the Assembly was that while the name and work of Dr. Robertson should be perpetuated by the lectures to be established yet that missions in the broadest sense should be treated and that in every division of mission work the spirit of the great missionary of the Northwest should be impressed upon the hearts and souls of the ministers and of the church workers of the future.

OUR DUTY TO OBEY!

Some there are even in our churches who say they do not believe in foreign missions. It is not a question of personal or private belief or disbelief or even of opinion. These are matters of no importance whatever. The sole question is one of simple obedience. Christ has commanded "Go ye!" ours not to reason why; ours not to make reply; ours but to do and die. Obedience is the crucial test of love. "If ye love me keep my commandments." "To obey is better than sacrifice." Obedience stands high in the divine economy.

Not only have we the command but it is backed up by example Acts 1:8; Acts 2:5 to 12. The apostles were to be home missionaries first—beginning at Jerusalem they were to go to the uttermost parts of the earth. Obedience to Christ's command resulted in glorious success, for, as they, under the influence and inspiration of the Holy Ghost preached the gospel of a living Christ three thousand were brought to acknowledge the Redeemer. We call this the Descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. What the Layman's Missionary Movement means is this: Pentecostal manifestations of the power of the Holy Ghost every time the gospel is preached; these not spasmodically, but continuously and as truly as effect follows cause so would Pentecost follow the preaching of the Word and modern Pentecosts become an ordinary result. If otherwise how is the end to be achieved? The world evangelized within the limits of our generation. Can such be done? Who dare limit the willingness and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works through human agency. The church must "obey," strive and pray. Sacrifice and consecrate must be its watchword, then this generation will accomplish the desired result.—Extract from an address on the Layman's Missionary Movement, by G. W. Armstrong, London.

The sorrows of the strong are little understood or comforted. Few persons think that leaders may grow faint and discouraged. The helpers often need help. Only the lonely Christ can comprehend the secret burdens uncomprehendingly borne by those upon whom weaker ones lean.