

Christian Messenger.

A REPOSITORY OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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WHOLE SERIES.
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Poetry.

A little while.

A little while to toil along
This weary, winding way,
And we shall join the ransomed throng,
And we shall sing love's choral song,
In yonder land of day.

A little while for doubt and gloom,
And feeble trust in God,
And faith shall spread her eagle plume,
The soul her palm and crown assume,
Forever with the Lord.

A little while to pour our love
On fading forms of clay,
To weep with tears of bitter grief,
With anguish that hath no relief
And death shall pass away.

A little while to scatter smiles
Like sunshine on our way,
With willing heart and kindly hand
To help each trembling, outcast band,
To hope, to watch, and pray.

A little while to do the work
Our Master's hand hath given:
Fast fleet away the hours of grace,
Night falls upon our dwelling-place,
Short space to work for heaven.

A little while to face the storm,
And breast the angry billow,
And Christ shall whisper, "Peace, be still,"
And, ransomed by our Lord's sweet will,
His breast shall be our pillow.

A little while! Take heed, my soul,
These words of love and warning:
That ere thou reach the appointed goal,
Thou go to Christ and be made whole,
And enter heaven's bright morning.

Miscellaneous.

To the Members of my Choir.

AN ADDRESS

By the late Honorary Organist to the Baptist Church,
Oldham.

It has for some time past been my intention to address this choir on the character of the work in which we are engaged, and on the necessary qualifications for it. The opening of our new chapel appears to me to be an appropriate opportunity for carrying that intention into practice. I have long suspected that the important nature of the duty which God in his providence has called us to discharge, is not realised to anything like its full extent, and I am quite sure that the qualifications for its performance have been, if not entirely overlooked, greatly underrated.

The office we hold is an important one, because of the nature of the service itself. Praise is a main element of worship, and cannot, any more than prayer, be offered acceptably without the deepest reverence and the most profound humility. It is a homage paid to God, a sacrifice laid at his feet, and it requires the exercise of the liveliest emotions of gratitude and love.

The fact that this is a proffered service on our part, does not relieve us from the claims it makes upon our own personal and individual worship; the worshipper is not to be lost in the singer; hymns were not written for music, but music for hymns; we are not required, we are not even permitted, to lose sight of our own devotions in ministering to the devotions of others; indeed the one is necessary to the other. If it be true in an argument that we cannot convince unless we believe, it is equally true that we cannot prompt or sustain the spirit of praise in others unless that spirit is deeply implanted in our own hearts. It is not the mere performance of music that constitutes true praise, for notes, however exquisitely sung, fall discordantly on the ear of God, unless accompanied by the sacrifice of an understanding and believing heart. Hence the necessity under which we are laid to keep the fires of our own devotion constantly aglow, lest in the effort to rekindle their dying embers, we exhaust the energies that ought to be reserved for fanning the flame of the Church's praise.

This office is important in its relation to the Church. In olden time, the musical ser-

vice of the Temple was arranged with a method and a precision which proves, not only the importance of the office itself, but also indicates that the office having been created, and filled with competent and responsible servants, should henceforth be regarded as an institution to which the Church might look, and look with confidence, for the discharge of the duty it had prescribed.

We are appointed to this service, and the Church expects from us a faithful and obedient fulfilment of it. We are bound to it by our allegiance to the Church, and by virtue of that law which exacts from each member, not the exercise merely, but the consecration of his own peculiar gift.

Our office is a responsible one.

Ministers tell us how greatly they find their hands strengthened by the judicious and skillful performances of the choir; and the congregation is dependent, in no ordinary degree, upon those who are charged with the service of song in the House of the Lord. The interpretation of every hymn we sing is practically in our hands, and unless we interpret truly, we perform our work indifferently, we do injustice to the spirit of the hymn, and lead the minds of those who bestow but little attention on this most important matter, seriously astray.

Dangerous from its prominence, from its exclusive character, and from its necessarily private arrangements. Its prominence courts observation and provokes criticism; its exclusive character excites envy; and the privacy and seclusion of its arrangements are a source of temptation to its members. There is the danger, also, of a pride that seeks only, or principally, or at all, to display its own performances, and there is the danger of converting the orchestra into an arena for the indulgence of a disgraceful rivalry.

Every one accepting an appointment of such a character should regard that acceptance as an act of individual consecration; not as a charge to be lightly undertaken, not as an occupation to be indulged in as an amusement, requiring no painstaking, no preparation, no study, no self-denial; for all these are necessary; but as a charge demanding the full exercise of our best endowments, the diligent use of our leisure, and, if need be, our most patient, laborious, and constant service.

I am thoroughly convinced that, unless we regard it in this light, viz., as an act of special consecration, we cannot do justice to it. If I am met with the obvious reply, that there are other duties, as well as this, demanding a consecration as complete, I must admit it at once; but no two duties are permitted to clash injuriously one with the other, and we can readily distinguish which has the most pressing claims; either we have or we have not, gifts specially appropriate to this service; if we have not, then let us, by all means, seek some other sphere of usefulness (and there are plenty open), for in the Church there is a demand corresponding with every gift; and to just the extent to which we are conscious of that gift, we are bound to seek its employment. If, on the other hand, we have gifts specially appropriate to this service, let them be laid, without hesitation, in all their completeness, and with all the purity of an unblemished offering, on the altar that sanctifieth the giver and the gift; only thus can the sacrifice rise like Abel's, and only thus can we escape the fearful and crushing reproof:—"Ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this at your hand? saith the Lord."

The qualifications for this office may be briefly stated. Of course there must be a good ear for music, and a good voice—a voice not necessarily powerful, but sweet and true. This voice should be carefully cultivated and improved by practice. So also with the study of the music itself. Singers should be constantly practising themselves in reading (musical notes), so as to be able to sing strange music at first sight. It is a very serious and fatal error to suppose that what we call a practice night, should be spent in overcoming the technical difficulties of the tunes we sing. All this should be done at home, and then, when we meet for rehearsal, it should be a rehearsal properly so called, viz., a performance beforehand, to perfect ourselves in that which we have previously studied in private. The rehearsal is not for individual

instruction, but to practice the choir as a whole,—to sing correctly and with effect.

But there is more than ear, and voice, and study required; and that is an intelligent apprehension of the spirit of the words we sing. Without this, true interpretation is impossible. You all know what different meanings we can convey by the same words spoken in different ways; how much more, then, can the signification of the words we sing be varied, when there are many trained voices, all combining to produce the same effect. There must, of course, be perfect agreement in the choir on this subject, else one voice, carelessly or ignorantly used, might destroy the meaning of an entire passage. This consideration leads me to the very obvious remark, that meetings for rehearsal (whenever they may be held) should be regularly and punctually attended. Let no one of you think you can be absent from rehearsal with impunity. In the first place, we are none of us so perfect as to be able to dispense with practice; and next, it is manifestly unfair to the remainder of the choir to introduce a voice that has not undergone the same training, and has not been drilled by the same discipline. One soldier in a whole regiment, marching out of step, not only destroys the beauty and completeness of every movement, but endangers the success of every evolution.

There is another qualification, too, which must not be overlooked, and that is, a right disposition. There must be the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price. Any infusion of jealousy, any element of that conceit which is the fruit of ignorance, can find no congenial abode with us, and is fatal to the success of our efforts. Nothing so surely destroys, first the peace, and next the usefulness of a choir, as unkind and unfriendly feelings amongst its members. Every choir insecure from external attack (in itself an inevitable annoyance) so long as there is union within; but no choir can live, after jealousy and envy have sown their mischievous and poisonous seed. If there be no higher ambition in any member than to sit in the seat of honour, or in the most conspicuous place, then the services of that member are contemptible. They are unworthy the Church, they are a disgrace to the choir, and they dishonour God. Any eruption of this kind breaking out on the hitherto healthy constitution of the choir should be dealt with like any other epidemic; the cause should be removed; and, painful as that duty would be to me, I should not for one instant shrink from a prompt and vigorous discharge of it. After having tried expostulation in vain, I should expel without further delay, any and every one who refused to be governed by the rules of our little society, and whose presence, instead of being an element of stability and a source of comfort, endangered the peace of the community, and shook the very foundation of its usefulness.

I have alluded, in passing, to the inevitable annoyance of external attack, in the shape of unfriendly criticism. This need never disturb our minds so long as we discharge our duty. If we do this, we shall have the satisfaction of feeling, that a duty discharged is a sacrifice accepted, with which only we who offer, and He who accepts, have anything to do; it will console us in many a disappointment, it will take the sting out of many a cruel speech, it will make the labour of our work a labour of love, and convert what would otherwise be an arduous and ungrateful task into a source of pleasure and a well-spring of perpetual delight.

Lastly, let the motives to this work be pure, and the service will be blessed; a delighted congregation will mark its approval, a grateful Church will smile its acknowledgments, and the ear of the Lord, which is ever open even to the cry of his children, will surely not turn away from the accents of their praise.—*Baptist Magazine.*

Misquotation of Scripture.

They are of the following kinds:—Those which resemble Holy writ—mere imitations; those which have additions—falsely called emendations; and genuine Scripture—misapplied.

"God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb," is a smooth line of Sterne's. The nearest approach to it in Scripture is Isa. 27: 8, "He stayed his rough wind in the day of his east wind."

"In the midst of life we are in death." Common Prayer. Yet it is said the celebrated Robert Hall chose it as a text for a funeral sermon.

"Not to be wise above what is written." Used to repress undue anxiety to comprehend the higher mysteries of Christianity. Has no place in the Word.

The oft-quoted phrase, "Seals to his ministry, and souls for his hire." A metaphor; whether approved or otherwise, it is not Scripture.

A very objectionable form is often used in prayer, "That the Spirit of the Lord would go from heart to heart, as oil from vessel to vessel." This phrase, if properly considered, would tend to lower our conceptions of the omnipresence of God, and does not convey a correct idea of the influence of Divine grace in the hearts and minds of men. It is not Scripture.

Kindness to animals is often enforced by—"The merciful man is merciful to his beast." Something like this may be found in Prov. 12: 10—"A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast."

"A nation shall be born in a day." There is no such prediction, either in the Old Testament or the New. The only Scriptural passage like it is Isaiah 66: 8—"Shall a nation be born at once?"

"Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." Prov. 27: 17, is by no means improved by the common version. "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend."

"That he who runs may read," conveys a notion that the writing is so distinct that a man sees it by the wayside while he is running. This is not the lesson Scripture teaches. Habakkuk 2: 2—"Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth." You perceive that the reading is to be deliberate—previous to running, and in order to it.

"Owe no man anything but love," is a mangled quotation of Rom. 13: 8, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another."

Matt. 18: 20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," is often used with the addition, "and that to bless them." This is a superfluous addition, and is not in harmony with the Redeemer's promise, and when attributed to him is incorrect. It may have its origin in Exodus 20: 24, "In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

2 Thess. 3: 1, "That the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified," is often quoted with the addition "run" after the words "free course."

Eph. 3: 20, "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think," has often appended to it "or are at all worthy to receive."

Peter remembered.

It is said of our Lord Jesus Christ that he was "seen of angels." They saw him from his birth till his death. They were the first who beheld him rise from the dead, for they "rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre," and proclaimed the fact to Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome. They likewise commissioned these women to announce his resurrection to his disciples, and distinctly to Peter. Mark 16: 7. "Go your way," was the charge given, "tell his disciples, and Peter." But why was this apostle so particularly remembered? Because, overcome by the power of temptation he had profanely denied his Lord; and in the depth of his grief therefor especially needed that consolation which the glad tidings of his Lord's triumph over death and the grave were fitted to impart. This was one reason. Another was because Peter, humbled and broken in spirit, might have thought, perhaps, that he was not indeed forgiven, but was excluded from his Master's favor; and Christ would deceive him on this point, and re-assure him of his love.