

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

Psalmody and Praise.

No. 6.

City choirs are subjects of remark, and perhaps anima-tion, in town, village, and rural hamlet; and it is, naturally enough, to be supposed that their standards of style, taste, and expression, are derivable from metropolitan sources. This, were the metropolitan standard what it should be, is proper; but if standards of excellence there are defective, then it is wrong to copy from them, and the defect of standard, there is, also, culpable.

That such a state of things is only attributable to our negligence and inattention to the proper cultivation of the art, is plain to every one; yet there are many reasons why such a state of things may be induced in the city, and not in the country.

First, country singers have more time to attend to rehearsal, and more leisure to devote to musical education, than most of these constituting the choirs of the city. Secondly, except the performers possess rare merit, there is really less encouragement given the chorist in the city than in that of the country; for, after all, the comparative taste is superior in the rural than in the metropolitan district, when the advantages of each are fairly considered.

Halifax has not, because of the lack of sufficient encouragement and remuneration, received much benefit from efficient public instructors; two or three only having remained sufficiently long to render valuable services demonstrative by products. The mere pittance doled out, as stipulation, to the hard-working professional for his labor, is often insufficient for payment of expenses. This stipulation too, is, I am told, not always paid; there being always a good percentage of every class whose lack of principle either restricts their amount of payment to the number of lessons which their own culpable delinquency has induced, or who refuse payment entirely.

Then, in consequence of this absence of remunerative fees and proper appreciation, efficient instructors are prevented from locating themselves here; cheap teachers give limited instruction, and the direct consequence is a low standard of perfection.

Such an unenviable state of musical morale cannot but be the result, when such causes are permitted to have influence, either in town or country; but they have a much more injurious effect and tendency in the former sections than in the latter, because of the influence and ascendancy ever obtainable by city practices and customs over those of the rural districts.

The country farmer may be an intelligent man enough, but his limited knowledge of principles have unfitted him for correct judgment, concerning what is not, and what is standard, in the usages of musical society in the city; while the supposition of greater advantages, and a higher standard of knowledge, may lead him to adopt even the faults as well as the virtues of city singers. For instance, B. Street choir may contain many powerful voices, and a fine organ and organist, and the congregation may be largely composed, on some Sabbaths, of country visitors. These may be delighted with the vocal harmony produced, and suppose that vocal harmony is only produced by efficiently trained, and competently qualified vocalists. But possibly the chorists may not even understand the rudimentary principles of the art which so establishes them in the estimation of the listening countryman. Then these choirs may sing choral harmonies in the style and with the movement of glees; "Old Hundred" as "Nativity;" "Mear," "Bedford," "Aylesbury" "China," "Daudee," "Martyr," St. David's and "St. Giles," as if they were properly sung in any and every style, dictated by the glossary, and the countryman, gratified at having learned some new thing since his arrival, dictates, upon his return, the false style, bad adaptation, unintelligible pronunciation and general rendition of these chorals to his choir at home.

Nor does the evil influence cease here. One choir copies from another. Choristers are, of course, more or less responsible for the style and rendition of the vocalization performed by their choirs; and are, also, responsible for the evils arising from imitations of it.

Churches, again, and clergymen, as the superintendents of the service, are responsible to the chorister, for the absence of good material in the choir, when the congregation contains it. It is a common thing even here, for clergymen to lament existing evils in connection with their choirs, when the remedies for such are never em-

ployed. Again, the church in S. Street may combine in its singing some important requisites of standard execution, yet the pronunciation may lack emphasis; or there may be very imperfect blending of the voices. Each tone may be sung without regard to the other parts; and the effect may be very bad. Again, the chorister, through inattention to musical dictionary, placed at the head of the music, may badly render every tune in the book, and through bad adaptation of words to tunes, or tunes to words, both the poet and musical composer may be grossly libelled.

In Halifax we have heard Old Hundred, and other standard chorals, which one would naturally suppose it impossible to mis-understand, performed in every variety of style from Allegro to Grave; yet we have recognised none of the solemn swell with which old Luther invested it, in any of the renditions; and we reluctantly mourned the public taste which permitted it.

The evils of the absence of style in Church Psalmody largely rob the department of praise in the sanctuary, of its solemnity. This branch of the service is frittered away, too often, by this means. If there is that in style which induces greater solemnity, or is productive of greater religious feeling, then, we ask, Why not employ it. A little study of style, and the object of it, a little attention to the signification of harmonies, and a little desire to make tunes the vehicles for solemn praise in the sanctuary, would enable christians to discharge their high positions of trust and responsibility with greater profit.

Of style I might continue to speak until these articles were voluminous. I shall refer to a few as of manifest importance, rather striving to avoid being tedious. Style has many teachers, both secular and sacred. In the present age, when the taste for the secular so rapidly usurps the place of the sacred in this prominent department of vocal usefulness, it becomes the student and the Teacher of the art, to guard carefully against the inroads of the destroying principles; and, aiming to feel the text he enunciates, choose carefully, proper vehicles of praise for the conveyance of the embodied idea. Overlooking, or insufficiently estimating the manifest importance of this, bad effects, bad adaptation, formal worship, and discreditable performances will, and must ensue.

Our ordinary musical dictionary contains too few sufficiently distinctive terms to make it a general guide to the style of every unmarked choral which our music books contain; too little is also known of the glossary we have; and much less do choristers accept the composed marked style as their guide, than the dictations of their own imperfect and perhaps vitiated taste.

For instance: Andante as defined in some dictionaries, is made to signify "slow, and with distinctness." In others "slow, and with a peculiar accent and movement;" leaving the uninitiated in a very unpleasant state of mystification as to what is meant by the latter portion of the sentence. There are other, even more ambiguous, definitions given of this common term, and, other than an experienced musician, frequently finds himself puzzled as to which rendering to accept. But a little study and comparison of all Andante chorals would give him the exact idea.

The movement of common Andante psalmody is, as near as possible, about half as fast as the tune "Siloam" is generally sung—not losing sight of the fact that we, in Nova Scotia, have yet to learn the true style of this pretty composition—and the "peculiar movement" consists in accenting andantes with equality and precision upon each separate part of the measure alike. The tune "Zion" is, in the original, an Andante; yet it is, throughout the city—and in many portions of the country sung as an Allegro. "Siloam" might properly be regarded as another, though of slightly different character, among Andantes; inasmuch as it partakes more largely to the legato susienuto than may be said of the former. In "Siloam" the long notes are crescendoed and diminuendoed; while the quarter notes and eighths have an equal accent, of a sforzando character; and the whole is sung in the closely connected and gliding manner of "Mount Vernon." This latter, pretty little parlor duet is also of the same character; is a legato con espressione in movement; its only variation in style being that its every note is performed with a swell, and all the intervals connected with a glide in affettuoso style; yet, if "Woodbury were to hear the rapid rendition of this sweet little gem, as performed in Nova Scotia generally, he might entertain some doubt as to its identity. It is generally drawled in haste, with a sort of sing-song movement, possessing as little soul as soporific nursery ballads generally have.

Were I to continue on, I should feel it my

duty to notice a great many varieties of accent, included within the signification of the postulate "peculiar movement," which constitutes a portion of the definition of the term "Andante;" but my course would necessitate copious illustration from the Andantes of the great Masters, and my space would be all occupied. As it is, the best advice to be given is "study various musical compositions, and compare together." That is the only way for improvement.

S.

For the Christian Messenger.

Rev. G. M. Grant and Religious Newspapers.

Dear Sir,—

I have read the Rev. G. M. Grant's Lecture on "Reformers of the nineteenth Century." There is much in it that might be controverted. The facts are not all correctly stated, and the opinions expressed, especially respecting those who are styled "Reformers," will not find sympathisers, I venture to predict, among the majority of sound religious thinkers in this Province.

There are some men, even in this nineteenth century, who try to be eloquent in the exposure of what they call "shams," and stigmatise earnestness in religion as "cant" and "humbug." There is nothing new in this. It has always been so.

Such as "speak evil of those things which they know not" have troubled the church in all ages, and I do not imagine that the race will die out before the millenium. Perhaps they unconsciously render service to the cause. Even Carlyle's wild tirades may be of use, although, like Sennacherib, "he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so."

But a christian minister should be very careful in administering censure. Mr. Grant has chosen to make a furious onslaught on "religious newspapers." Having adduced from one of the late Mr. Robertson's Lectures a passage full of "malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness," he says that "most certainly a Religious Newspaper means a newspaper that has no religion."

Now I have great respect for Mr. Grant, and entertain the hope that he will become a useful minister of the gospel. But the expression I have quoted is nothing less than a calumny—an insult which ought to be promptly retracted.

A religious newspaper is generally connected with some denomination, and is intended to furnish to the members of that denomination a continuous journal of its progress, together with instructive articles, original and selected, on various matters of truth and practice. There is commonly, too, an abstract of the news of the day, so prepared as to give the readers of the Paper a weekly sketch of the state of the country or of the world at large, unmingled with political squabbles or party contentions.

I conducted such a Journal for several years, and can honestly affirm that I laboured all the time under a deep sense of responsibility. I knew that my readers depended on me for truthful statements of affairs, and that many of them had no religious literature but such as they found in my columns. I exerted myself to provide for them a weekly amount of useful reading and had the satisfaction of knowing that my efforts were appreciated and successful.

The religious newspapers which I now see, and those which are published in this Province, are evidently conducted on the same principles. They supply an admitted want of the denomination. It is really too bad to speak of them as Mr. Grant has done. I hope that he will see the unfairness of the censure and apologise to the Religious Press, and to the Denominations which sustain it.

Yours, &c., AN EX-EDITOR.

Feb. 13, 1866.

For the Christian Messenger.

Memoir of Harris Harding.

It has long appeared to me highly desirable that, not merely Obituary Notices, or references in a general History, but extended Memoirs of our justly venerated fathers in the ministry, should be published. If judiciously prepared, they could not fail to be useful in various respects. By furnishing the Memoir named above Bro. Davis has set a good example, and has, in my opinion, rendered good service to the denomination, and to the cause of vital godliness in general. Obviously facts have been collected with diligence, narrated with faithfulness, and interspersed with wholesome and profitable observations.

The subject of this Memoir was an extraordi-

nary man. Though not in all respects a model man to be imitated, yet he evidently possessed ardent piety and indomitable zeal; and his faithful and earnest labors were unquestionably rendered successful in the conversion and salvation of many souls.

Two prominent traits in his character were shrewdness and peacefulness. These may be illustrated by a couple of anecdotes, related to me by his friends. In his youthful days he asked the Captain of a vessel, "Are you a Christian?" The Captain replied, "If any one should tell me that I am not a Christian, I would knock him down." Bro. Harding promptly answered, "That would not prove you to be a Christian." At a late period some hay was stolen from him. A friend asked him, "Would you not like to know who stole it?" "No," said he, "I had rather not; for I might have an ugly feeling toward him."

References to others contained in this Memoir, call up various reminiscences. One or two may be noticed here. Elder Alexander Crawford, mentioned p. 104, remarked to me, long after his residence in Yarmouth, that some persons there seemed to make religion consist so entirely in strong excitement as actually to produce a prejudice in his mind against the very idea of religious feeling: "but," he added, "I am aware that where there is no feeling there is no religion." He stated also that reports which he had heard respecting Bro. Enoch Towner (p. 90.) representing him as extravagant in views and expressions, had excited prejudice against him; but that on hearing him preach, this was wholly removed, and he was led henceforth to esteem and love him, as a faithful and useful servant of Christ.

I agree with Bro. Davis in the opinion, that the account relative to the advanced age of Rev. Edmund J. Reis, (p. 75, &c.) must be incorrect. I saw him about the year 1809, and subsequently met him, and conversed with him, at our Association in 1815. From his appearance at these times I can not imagine that he was above 60 years old in 1832, when he is said to have died. As he was a man of considerable note, and his interesting history strikingly illustrates the power of divine grace, it would evidently be well for some one acquainted with him to furnish additional particulars, and to state his age more definitely.

In concluding my notice of this valuable Work, I remark that it obviously can not be afforded for a lower price than that for which it is sold. None should grudge to give a dollar for it; but all will do well to purchase it readily, and peruse it attentively. Such is my opinion.

C. TUPPER.

Aylesford, Jan. 30, 1867.

For the Christian Messenger.

Woman has Rights.

I am very far from being an advocate for "woman's rights" if by that term is to be understood that she should be admitted to the pulpit, the bar, the legislative hall, &c., &c. But woman has rights, and among the principal of these is, the right to have her powers of mind developed and cultivated. The very fact that nature, or, rather the God of nature, has designed her for the privacy of the domestic circle—for home—is a reason that she should be furnished with the means to enjoy that privacy, to render that home pleasant. Nothing, religion excepted, would so largely contribute to this end, as a well disciplined mind. This in our province has up to the present time been denied her. Throughout the length and breadth of the land we find, here and there, a man who has received classical education. But where is the woman to be found who has received similar advantages? Alas nowhere.

Not a few of the educated men among us are our loved Acadia's sons. We are proud of the men and of the College which has made such men. But while our denomination has been making praise-worthy efforts to elevate man, What has been done for woman?

I do not ignore the existence of the Female Seminary at Horton. It has effected much, considering the disadvantages with which both teachers and learners have had to contend. Among the most intelligent women in the Province are to be classed those who have there been educated. But the mental training received there, compared with that which young men receive at the College reminds one of "dogs eating of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." We ask for something more than this. We even ask for woman equal educational advantages with man. This, however will never be till fathers, husbands and brothers are not only willing but anxious that their female relatives enjoy these advantages; for so long, and so