

FROM OBSERVATIONS UNDER THE MICROSCOPE of the blood of patients using Fel... low's Compound Syrup of Hypophosphites...

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHOIR.

BY A LEADER.

I have long suspected that the important nature of the duty which God in his providence has called us to discharge, is not realized to anything like its full extent...

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.

The fact that this is a professed service on our part, does not relieve us from the claims it makes upon our own personal and individual worship: the worshiper 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 can not 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 and harmoniously sung, fall discordantly on the ear of God unless accompanied by the sacrifice of an understanding and believing heart.

This office is important in its relation to the church. In olden times the musical service of the Temple was arranged with a method and a precision which not only proves the importance of the office itself, but also indicates that the office having been created, and filled with competent and responsible servants, should thenceforth be regarded as an institution to which the church might 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 skilful performance 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 if we do not interpret truly, we perform our work indifferently, do injustice to the spirit of the hymn, and lead the mind of those who bestow but little attention on this most important matter, seriously astray.

It is a dangerous service.

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 privacy and seclusion of its arrangements is a source of temptation to its members. There is the danger, also, of a pride that seeks to display its own performance, 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, nor 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 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, 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 new 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 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; there is needed 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; one voice, carelessly or ignorantly used, might destroy the meaning of an entire passage. This consideration leads us to the very obvious remark, that meetings for rehearsal should be regularly and punctually attended. Let no one of you think you can be absent from rehearsal. 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, 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 is secure from external attack, 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 honor, 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, they dishonor God. Any eruption of this kind breaks out on the hitherto healthy constitution of the choir, should be dealt with like any other epidemic; the cause should be removed.

I have alluded, in passing, to the 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 a 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 labor of our work a labor 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 delightful 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.—National Baptist.

THE GROWTH PRINCIPLE IN THE CHURCHES.

From the time that Paul left Titus in Crete till the present day many things have been set in order, and many things also have been allowed to fall into confusion. There have been ebbs and flows in the life of the churches as in other things; but, on the whole, from that day to this—taking the state of the churches then and now—the progress is unquestionably very marked and manifold.

Yet very much still remains to be done in our day. The work before Christian men and women now is not merely to evangelise the careless and irreligious at home and the heathen abroad, but also to carry the regenerating, reforming spirit of the Gospel into the churches; so that both in respect to organisation and working there may be an increasing approximation to the ideal of perfection held up to us in the pages of the New Testament.

To some, indeed, this may seem needless, because in their view their churches are perfect already, and have all along been perfect. But, while most people at one time or other of their lives have had this dream of a perfect church—either the exact model of the apostolic church or a lineal descendant of it, at the time they cherish this dream they have neither much experience nor influence. Actual Christian work soon dispels it, and opens their eyes to many little—sometimes great—defects and shortcomings. As a matter of fact, at the present day some of the ablest members in every church and denomination, are earnestly striving, with all the wisdom they can command, to rectify existing abuses, and bring in a purer and higher condition of life and working. And in this there is nothing strange or accidental. In all departments of activity and labour it is the same. No institution, and no mode of working by which man holds on his way in the world, is allowed to remain from year to year, and from generation to generation, unchanged. The influences of the present are ever coming in to modify the things handed down by the past, and to carry them a stage on towards the ideal perfect.

By the ordering and decree of Heaven there is advance and growth in social and political and spiritual things just as surely as in natural things. As there is first the blade and then the ear and then the full corn in the ear in the natural harvest, so assuredly is there in the spiritual harvest that is coming forward throughout the various tribes of men.

Not more abortive and disastrous would be the natural order of things in which the blade of spring was to continue the same tender green shoot all through the seasons of the year, than that in which the spiritual attainment of any one generation was made the limit and measure of attainment for all generations to come.

Stagnation—or standing still—is the name for such a state of things, and standing still or stagnation, in all things which our eyes behold, is simply the process which precedes death. If a thing is to live and be of use in the world it must have room to move and change—in other words to grow. There is no place in the creation for what is fixed and unyielding. The very hills change, and the valleys and the water courses. There is not a single river at this moment flowing down to the ocean through precisely the same channels over which it poured its current some years ago. At one part a rock has been more deeply scooped out, at another an embankment has been encroached on; at a third a shallow has been increased or diminished. The face of the earth which we now behold, yes the sky likewise, with sun, moon, and stars, are not just what our forefathers, 2,000 years ago, looked on. All are changing

and moving on in their various paths according to the will of their Creator. As was very clearly seen long ago by the psalmist, when, with his eye on both earth and heaven, looking-up to God, he said, "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shall Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same and Thy years shall not fail." And the same is seen in the common things of our everyday life and work. In them changes are ever being introduced. There is scarcely an employment in which they are not familiar, and looked for as a matter of course. And through them—such things as improvements in machinery and skill in working—trade and manufacture increase and grow, and bring prosperity and happiness in their train.

And then when we come to the New Testament the same principle meets our view. Here we find change, and advance, and growth, very clearly implied, and in operation. The whole tenor of Scripture proceeds on the principle that there is advance, both in the mode of God's dealings with us, and in our perception and capacity for divine things. True, God in His own thought is ever the same; but He reveals Himself to us according as we are able to take in and profit by His revelation. "In times past He spoke unto the Fathers by the prophets; in these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son." And, while the revelation of the Son will continue, in itself, the same till the end of time, it cannot be the same to us, but changes according as our perception and capacity for understanding and being moulded by it increase and strengthen within us. And hence is the exhortation to grow into Him in all things who is the Head; and the ideal held up to us of the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In growing up into this image, in advancing towards this fulness, each generation is to rise superior to the preceding. Some defect of the past—some dullness—some misapprehension—some mistake must be rectified—some new light—some fresh spiritual force must be gained. Some of the things that are wanting must be set in order.

And certainly, one of these things that are yet wanting is a clear and universal recognition of this principle of advance and progress. Few things perhaps are more needed than that, on the part of all the churches throughout the body of their membership, it be deemed a settled and unquestioned law that we are not to keep clinging to the past, and seeking simply to be what our forefathers were before us, to believe what they believed, and to do as they did; but, that as we have our lot assigned on an advanced point in the world's history, we are bound to take in a fuller and broader vision,—the vision actually before us—and to do the work which pertains to our day and place in history, as our forefathers did in their day and in the position in which they were placed.

The oneness of the church—its personal identity in all ages does not consist in its being now precisely what it was two hundred or a thousand years ago, but in a living fellowship and harmony running throughout all generations of Christians, just as the oneness of the body throughout life does not consist in its continuing to be always exactly what it was at any given period, at youth, for example, but in a continuous living principle running through-out all its stages—youth merging into manhood, and manhood into maturity and old age. We are conscious that we are now the same persons we were from our earliest recollection; but, nevertheless, we are very different, we think differently and act differently from what we did in childhood. So the church, which has both childhood and youth, manhood and maturity, to pass through ere it reaches the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In its manhood, while it still remains the same church, it is very different from what it was in childhood and youth; and requires to act very differently from the way it did then. When it is a child it speaks as a child; but when it becomes a man it puts away childish things, and speaks and acts as a man. What was appropriate enough in childhood is no longer so in youth; just as what was appropriate in youth is no longer so in manhood, when a new and advanced mode of procedure is entered upon. So, what was appropriate and becoming enough for the churches in the time of the Reformation, whether on the Continent or at home, is no longer so now when three hundred years have rolled

past. We now live in a very changed state of things from what existed at that period of the church's history. The conditions under which we are called on to do our work are very different from those under which our forefathers had to do theirs, and what is before us is to do this advanced work of the present—the work of Christ as it comes to us under the influences and conditions of the present—not the work of the past, which was the work of childhood and youth, and which is already done, and well done, and beneath our feet as our present standing ground—but the work of the present, the work of manhood and mature age.—For the churches now to be looking back to our forefathers of the Reformation period, and taking their model from them, is as unbecoming as would be the act of a strong man standing up at his bench or anvil, and telling us that he considered his duty simply to be to work as he had done in childhood. "As he had done in childhood!" would indignantly burst forth from many voices, "when he has grown up to be a tall, well-knit, powerful man; shame on him to be setting himself such a meagre task, when he ought to be working with ten-fold the energy, and skill, and zeal which he was able to exert when a child. It is the task of a man which he is now bound by every consideration of fairness and honour to be setting for himself."

And so, if there are spectators beholding us, as doubtless there are, from the great cloud of witnesses around, remonstrances many and keen will be breathed down upon the churches which, in place of looking forward to the work that God is giving them to do in the present, are looking back and saying, "What we are to see is what our forefathers saw 300 years ago. What we are to believe is what they have handed down to us. What we are to preach is the doctrine which they have formulated in their immovable creeds." As if you had not eyes of your own to see with for yourselves, and minds and hearts with which to judge and approve for yourselves—yes, and hearts and minds and eyes blessed with the accumulated experience and privileges of ten generations in advance of those whom you seek to imitate. Why, were those great workers of the past to visit you they would give you small thanks for your imitations. "In place of being so anxious," they would say, "about squaring your work by ours, you ought to have taken up the work at the point where you found it, and pushed it onward a stage, as we endeavoured to do in our day. Your eyes ought, by this time, to have been clearer, and your minds stronger, and your capacities for work immeasurably greater than was possible to us ten generations ago. In place of thus standing still as you have been attempting to do, you should have been conscientiously moving forward and growing and advancing in stature with the advancing years?" This remonstrance will yet be listened to.—And when once this is done, and the enervating habit of clinging to the past frankly and consciously abandoned, one of the things that are wanting will have been supplied, and the way opened up for the remedying and supplying of almost every other want. The Ecclesiastical Reform Bill will then have been passed and accepted of by Christendom, and a period of steady and uninterrupted progress entered upon by the churches.—Freeman.

Correspondence.

For the Christian Messenger.

LINES ADDRESSED TO MRS. J. P. SAUNDERS ON THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND.

With wintry winds and moaning woods, With stormy sky and ice-bound floods, All nature seems to mourn; As with sad and measured tread, By friendly hands the noble dead, To his last home is borne.

I little thought, when first we met, His sun on earth so soon would set, His vacant place be seen; That he so soon would reach the burne, From which no traveller doth return, So little do we ken.

As through a glass we darkly see, The things permitted, here to be, The time to us not known; 'T were better thus, for, did we know, How tasteless would this world below, To all mankind become.

A father's form is laid at rest, His soul we trust is with the blest, Around the snow-white throne; Four lovely boys lie by his side, Two wore his hope two wore his pride, On earth he leaves no son.

A widow mourning o'er his bier, An only daughter weeping there— Disturbs not his last sleep; Earth to earth and dust to dust, The treasure's where it will not rust, Earth but the casket keeps.

Yet look aloft amid thy tears, A crown of life each lived one wears, Where you may meet again; When thou the fiery furnace through, Shall bid this sorrowing world adieu, With all its grief and pain.

S. A. H.