

Sunday Reading.

Autumn.

BY D. C. COLESWORTHY.

Oh, the forsaken trees! they grieve
In loneliness to-day,
As the wild winds a requiem weave,
And tear their life away.

The leaves have fallen one by one,
And strew the frozen ground;
Or flashing in October sun,
Are whirling round and round.

The streams that in their gladness leapt,
When skies were warm and bright,
Are quiet now, as if they slept
Beneath a shield of light.

I sit and muse. Oh, stern Decay,
Thou hast with fringes cold
Touched field and forest, and to-day
Nature is gray and old.

And thou wilt breathe on beauty's cheeks,
And dim the sparkling eye,
And voices that in kindness speak
Will not to love reply.

This form shall fade and perish, too,
With trees and leaves and flowers;
Thanks be to God! I have in view
A brighter world than ours.

Where parted friends shall re-unite
Upon a blissful shore,
And with the angels walk in light
And joy forevermore.

Church Music.

When we consider the prominence that has always been given to Music in religious services, it is astonishing how little is generally understood of the true principles on which this universal custom is based. The idea of Church Music as an aid to worship is too commonly lost sight of, or, at all events, obscured by florid and utterly undevotional performances, which serve no end but the gratification of the performers and a section of the listeners. The glory of God, which is the object of all true worship, appears to enter but little into the thoughts of many of our modern choirs.

The great musical activity of the present day, the new resources, appliances, and facilities that modern invention has given, cast upon us an increased responsibility in applying these advantages rightly and effectually to God's greater honor and glory. Music is a moral agency, designed to foster and sustain the best aspirations of our nature. It has the power of awakening echoes of itself in minds susceptible to its influence—it can wonderfully answer to and reinforce emotions and desires, can quicken spiritual sensibility and minister to the heart's affections. Such are its great powers, when rightly used; and correspondingly great is the failure when it is diverted to lower uses.

Sacred music ought to be not only lofty and refined, but also well correlated to the purport of the words to which it is joined, as to bring out their meaning and give force and dignity to their expression. If it fails to do this, it does positive harm by lowering and detracting from the real import of what is going forward. To take a common instance of such failure, what a jar upon one's feelings it is to hear some solemn psalm—the expression of the Psalmist's innermost heart—sung to some light, complacent chant, with perhaps a staccato accompaniment on the organ, intended to prevent any slackening of the time, as if to show how very far from the real meaning of the text must be the ideas presented to singers and congregation. In truth, the setting of the psalms is a matter that demands and will repay long and serious consideration. In the matter of Hymn-singing, there is not the same room for error, since, with the number of excellent Hymns in use, it is next to impossible for organist or choir to go astray in the selection of suitable tunes, except through sheer wilfulness. But even here how often is the effect of the most touching hymn, even when wedded to the most appropriate music, marred and spoiled by the careless performance of the singers.

Another point too often lost sight of, and which cannot be too frequently reiterated and enforced, is that the object of both organ and choir is to lead and assist the congregation in their proper share of Divine Worship. The choir is supposed to lead the congregation, but practically it too often takes the words out of their mouths. Real, congregational singing is very rare in Canada—much rarer than in England or Wales.

Here and there, no doubt, we meet with it, but as a rule, the part sustained by the congregation in Canadian churches is faint and indistinct. It is impossible to overestimate the loss to united worship arising from this defect. The effect of a large body of voices singing with one heart and consent is one of the grandest and most inspiring things conceivable. There is something contagious in it; and even when rough and uncultivated, it has a magnificence of its own, for which the most finished performances of a select body of singers, are a miserable substitute.

Congregational singing is one of the great wants of the Church of England in Canada, and we cannot but think that with more consideration for the congregation, and more curbing of ambitious tendencies on the part of choir and organist, we might see a vast improvement in this important part of our public worship.—*Church Guardian*.

"Christ in the House."

The great work of the gospel is not so much to operate on communities, and awaken a deep interest in large gatherings of people, as to produce a desire in the hearts of individuals to seek for themselves an interest in the work of Christ, and to make known to others their love to him and their submission to his government. An editorial in the last London Baptist on 'Christ in the House' puts this matter in a clear bright light that must profit whoever reads it. It says:

There must be religion in our work as well as work in our religion—one being the complement of the other—if we would live at our best by taking Christ as our daily exemplar. We may be quite sure that the world will not become what it ought to be until Christ is found in the workshop and the market, as well as in the church—a pattern for week-day labour as well as Sabbath service. Everything may be said to be consecrated to the Creator's glory which is used aright; and to keep in the way which is prescribed, the Scripture must never be read through the eye of human prejudice, for where this mistake is made there will be a visible growth in Pharisaism, but no advance in spirituality. Honest secular labour has been ennobled by the example of our Lord and His apostles; but even their highest deeds were misinterpreted because misapprehended by the self-righteous Jews who looked upon them. So perverted was their vision that they appear really to have thought that the Sabbath was profaned when the day was being honoured as it had never been honoured before by the performance of miracles which revealed the hand of God. We pity the self-complacent time-servers of Palestine whose head and hearts alike resisted even Divine appeals; but their obduracy and self-assurance have a lesson for modern times which should not be overlooked. They show, at least, that under certain conditions nothing can exceed the unreasonable of reasonable beings, to whom the most convincing evidences of their Lord's divinity and mission of mercy are nothing more than jewels exhibited to the blind. They show also that Christ may be rejected when He is nearest at hand to save. Had the Jerusalem citizens received Him into their houses, they would not only have reaped individual benefit beyond their power to calculate, but the catastrophe which overwhelmed the city in the next age could never have happened. This history, as well as our own experience, reveals the encouraging fact that private graces redound to the public good.

The presence of Christ in the house, or in the family undoubtedly means the possession of what is best in the way of worldly prosperity joined to the surest of eternal prospects. Perhaps, as a rule, Christians do not outwardly show enough of confidence in their religion; for as becomes its Divine author, it yields most to those who expect most; the best things of to-day are but the precursors of better things to-morrow. What we need more to realise is, that the influence of Christ extends to the smallest things of our earthly life as well as to our eternal interests. In this respect the great and lesser things of the natural world afford many analogies of that which is spiritual. The creative hand reveals its power as strikingly in the smaller objects as in those of impressive magnitude; and to preserve the reigning harmony alike require the Divine oversight. In the case of moral or spiritual life our wants are precisely similar: we must not relegate what we conceive to be our greater concerns to Christ, to the exclusion of other things, if life is to go on harmoniously and successfully. He is a great Saviour because His hand is capable of reaching so far in the daily ministry to our ever-recurring wants; and greater things are always safe when Christ looks after what is least. The happy home is where this truth is admitted and acted upon;

the truly successful tradesman is he who allows it to influence his calculations; the most worthy philosopher is the student who accepts this landmark as the beginning of wisdom. There is a favourite saying that charity begins at home; and while recognising this old word as the synonym of love, we may add, that all things which are worthy and profitable will also begin there if Christ reigns in the house.

The teaching which brings Christ into closer contact with the home life of the people, and that shows them how the Divine sympathy extends to all the greater and lesser contingencies of life, is what we specially need in these fast living days. We have so far cause for encouragement that we have in the aggregate more of such teaching than ever before. Hence, a teacher who keeps Christ in the front, is of more service to the age than an æsthetic worshipper of the past, whose prescriptions for the renovation of society could not always, nor perhaps often, be carried out.

Denominational Items.

'A Wesleyan missionary in India, after much talking and teaching, began to encourage hope that one of his inquirers was proceeding rightly towards a 'sound' conversion. In previous visits he had explained the Gospel to him, and left a Testament for his further instruction. Calling in his rounds at the village where lived this 'anxious inquirer,' he was pleased with the progress he made, and intimated the possibility of baptising him on his next call, asking him, in the interval, to read the Testament specially with a view to that ordinance. In due course the missionary came round, and, after inquiry and long conversation, inquired if he had read about baptism in the Testament, and wished to be baptized. He had read, and did wish to be baptized. 'Get me a basin half filled with water,' said the teacher. 'What for?' inquired the convert. 'For me to baptize you, was the reply. 'But you cannot baptize me in a basin. I thought you were going with me to the river.' 'Oh, no; no occasion for that. I can baptize you with water by sprinkling some on your face in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Have you not read the book I left you and advised you to read?' 'Yes, I have read it, but didn't find anything there like what you are talking about. Is it in the book, the Testament, you left me?' 'Oh, yes, it is there, clear enough.' 'Then,' said the unsophisticated inquirer, 'then, sir you must have left me the wrong book.'

The *Michigan Herald* gives the following:—'One of the Baptists pastors of this city preached on Sunday last a very pithy and pungent sermon from the text—'Will a man rob God?' The question was answered in the affirmative as regards some men, judging both by past history and present examples. This was illustrated by an anecdote, very felicitously told. We shall aim only to give the point. It was so sharp it could not well escape the listener. A man asks another, 'Are you a believer in the Christian religion?' 'Oh certainly.' 'You are a member of some church, then, I suppose?' 'Member of a church? No, indeed. Why should I be a member of a church? It is quite unnecessary. The dying thief wasn't a member of a church, and he went to heaven.' 'But of course you've been baptized?' 'You know the command—' 'Been baptized? Oh, no. That's another needless ceremony. I'm as safe as the dying thief was, and he never was baptized.' But surely since you will not join a church or be baptized, you do something in acknowledgment of your faith? 'You've got your means—you help the cause in some way?' 'No, sir. I do nothing of the kind. The dying thief—' 'Let me remark my friend, before you go any further, that you seem to be on pretty intimate terms with the dying thief. You seem to derive a great deal of consolation from his career; but mind you there is one important difference between you and him. He was a dying thief—and you are a living one.'

Divine Providence afforded Israel a daily supply of manna for the subsistence of the body, and divine grace will, and does, grant daily competency of spiritual food to sustain, and strengthen, and promote the growth of spiritual life in the godly man.

Spurgeonic.

LONDON: METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE.—The Rev. C. H. Spurgeon presided last week at the annual meeting in connection with the Loan Tract Society, which lends Mr. Spurgeon's sermons to houses in the neighbourhood by means of distributors.—The secretary, Mr. J. W. A. Capel, read the report, which stated that the year had been one of great labour and many disappointments by removals through death and other causes. There were at present 104 districts visited weekly, as against seventy-six in 1876, embracing nearly 4,000 families. The Rev. J. Harrald, the treasurer, reported that the society closed the year's work with a small balance in hand. Mr. Spurgeon said he could say from his own experience that his sermons were a blessing to some people, for that they had proved so to him. When he had been 'down in the dumps,' his wife had read something to comfort him, which really did so, but which he did not find till afterwards was a part of one of his own sermons. He endeavoured to use the simplest language possible, that every one might understand him, and could not misunderstand if they would. This of course, did not give him the chance of being considered a fine preacher. But he thought he could do the fine thing if he tried. He could not, however, speak Latin so naturally as pigs squeaked. He must have a white cravat and a gown first. When he was at Geneva he was made to wear Calvin's gown, but he longed to get out of those 'filthy rags.' What the better was a man for them? He was like a fellow running in a sack. But who could find his way to heaven with a gown and hard words? Everyone wanted a sermon put plainly; even the learned man wanted the Gospel put plainly to him on Sunday.

Mr. Spurgeon lately wrote:—Lord Alvanley had been dining, on one occasion with Mr. Greville, whose dining-room had been newly and splendidly decorated. The meal was, however, a very meagre and indifferent one. Some of the guests were flattering their host upon his magnificence, taste, and hospitality. 'For my own part,' interposed Alvanley, 'I would rather have seen less gilding and more carving.' The like preference has arisen in our mind when hearing or reading rhetorical discourses with little or no Gospel in them. Grand expressions, but what do they express? A sermon should be like a meal; it should in every instance feed the soul with heavenly meat. Mere words, however well arranged, can never do this. Flowers if you please, but fruit also. Gilding in its place; but ten times as much carving, or we pray thee have us excused.

An Eager Learner.

Christian women in India work in the dispensary as well as in the zenana, and many a touching incident shows 'The untaught heathen waits to know the joy the Gospel will bestow.' From the last report of the Religious Tract Society we learn that a lady was dispensing medicine, when a woman presented herself holding in her hand a crumpled bit of paper on which were printed the words, 'God is love.' These are good words, she said. Do you think that your God would love me? She had walked twenty miles to ask the question. There are hundreds of thousands of hearts that would welcome these glad tidings. Ought they not forthwith to be made known in all the world to every creature? 'How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?'

COMPLAINT.—A dear Christian brother complains that the ladies sweep the streets with their dresses. We sympathize with him. It is wasteful, burdensome, and filthy. The morality of dragging silk, or satin, or whatever costly material in the filth, wearing it out upon the gravel, or pavements, while there are so many demands for economy and generosity, is very questionable. It is just right to use hard earned money for such purposes; it is downright waste. When will Christian women be controlled by high moral convictions in the matter of dress?

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

FOURTH QUARTER.

Lesson IX.—NOVEMBER 30, 1884.

TRUE WISDOM.

Prov. viii. 1-17.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 10, 11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—'I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.'—Prov. viii. 17.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Voice of Sinful Pleasure. Prov. vii. 6-27.
T. The Lesson.
W. The Wise and Foolish Virgins. Matt. xxv. 1-13.
Th. The Foolish Esau. Gen. xxv. 29-34.
F. The Wise Joseph. Gen. xxxix. 1-12.
S. The Foolish Rich Young Man. Matt. xix. 16-22.
S. The Wise Mary. Luke x. 38-42.

ANALYSIS.—I. The Call of True Wisdom, Vs. 1-5. II. The Characteristics of True Wisdom, Vs. 6-16. III. The Early Seeker Rewarded, Vs. 17.

QUESTIONS.—Vs. 1-5.—How does wisdom make herself heard? Where does she cry? What special characteristic is connected with the places where she cries? Why is she so anxious to be heard? Is her call confined to a few? What two classes are mentioned as addressed? Who are meant by them? How does all this represent the call of the gospel?

Vs. 6-16.—Does she ever teach error? How does she regard wickedness? What is said about the words of her mouth? Are they difficult to understand? To whom is the gospel of Christ simple and plain? To what three precious things is wisdom said to be superior?

Vs. 17.—Whom does wisdom love? How do we show our love for wisdom? Who are specially encouraged to seek this wisdom?

The characteristics of wisdom given in this lesson, are such as belong to Christ; and, indeed, some commentators believe that there is here a prophecy of Christ; our Lord himself as speaking under the title of Wisdom. Whatever thought of this kind may have been, or have not been, in the mind of Solomon, we go back of the writer to the Holy Spirit under whose inspiration he wrote, and who knew how well these words set forth the teachings of him who was to come. In chapter vii. sinful pleasure is represented as a fair, but dissolute woman, enticing the youth to evil. In this lesson wisdom is also represented as a woman, but pure, virtuous, and lovely, who is inviting the youth into the ways of righteousness and understanding.

NOTES.—Vs. 1-3.—Wisdom. Not worldly sagacity and prudence, but wisdom that is from above. It here represents the Lord Jesus offering himself to sinners. It is his wisdom poetically personified. Cry. Call aloud in offering guidance and salvation to men. Understanding. Put as a synonym of wisdom. Notice the parallelism between the two members of the sentence, a characteristic of Hebrew poetry. In the top of high places. Sin loves dark places; the heathen oracles spoke obscurely; false religions give an uncertain sound; but divine wisdom speaks openly, and seeks conspicuous places, that her voice may be heard telling the good news of salvation and life. In the places of the paths. Revised Version: crossways; where paths meet and travelers abound. At the gates. The places of giving judgment, and of public resort. At the coming in of the doors. The idea is still publicity. Wisdom offers herself not to the few, but to the many, and seeks those places to cry out where the multitudes gather.

Vs. 4, 5.—Unto you, O men! There is the general call to all, like the gospel's 'whosoever will.' It is not simply to the seed of Abraham, but to the whole race of Adam. As all have sinned, all need the grand remedy for sin. Simple. Two classes are now designated which comprise all of the unregenerate—the simple, i. e., the inexperienced and unsuspecting, like the young, who are where they will become a prey to the tempter; and fools, i. e., those who having put away instruction are going on in the ways of sin, and hardening themselves in evil.

Vs. 6-9.—Excellent things. Literally, princely things, or, as in Revised Version, noble things; things as superior to other matters as a prince's position is to that of other men. Opening of my lips. My words. Right things. Honest, true, straight things. The message of the gospel is of supreme importance, and every word is truth. Wickedness is an abomination to my lips. It is as important to hate a lie as it is to love the truth. We are to abhor that which is evil, as well as to cleave

to that which is good. All the words . . . in righteousness. What a grand thing for us that the gospel gives an absolutely perfect standard of right and truth! Not one word of error; no guile found in our Lord's mouth. Forward. Crooked, false. In the margin, wreathed, i. e., twisted out of shape. Plain. So plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein. To him that understandeth. But some will not understand. They close eyes and heart to the truth, and then complain of its obscurity.

Vs. 10, 11.—Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice (unallayed) gold. Were men as eager for heavenly wisdom as for money, none would be unsaved. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.' For. There is a reason for this exhortation that goes so contrary to worldly desires and maxims. Wisdom is better than rubies (gems or pearls). It is the pearl of great price, for which it is wise to sell all.

Vs. 12, 13.—Dwell with prudence. Heavenly wisdom is not of such an eternal nature that it is not fitted to our daily life and need. The religion of Christ is not something of mere exalted theory, or of transient emotion, but leads to holy living. Witty inventions. Revised Version, wise counsels. Render, find out the knowledge of wise counsels; i. e., in practical application to our every-day affairs. To hate evil. It is as necessary to hate as to love; but what we are to hate is not persons but sin; and we cannot love God without hating sin. Pride, arrogance (haughtiness of spirit), etc. Witness how our Lord denounced these. Humility is the handmaid of wisdom.

Vs. 14-17.—Counsel. Good judgment. I am understanding: I have strength. Or, according to Stuart, As for me, my might is understanding. The genuineness of wisdom, its practical power, seems to be the point insisted upon, as distinguished from the airiness or effervescence of mere words. By me kings reign, etc. True wisdom, or piety, fits kings for their position to rule justly and well, and gives perpetuity to their kingdoms. Injustice and spiritual wisdom tend to overthrow the strongest kingdoms, as all history proves. Early. Earnestly, diligently, and therefore speedily, and in early life. Shall find. A positive promise, coming with great force to the young. See Matt. vii. 7.

The gospel call is finely illustrated in this lesson. That call is found in every page of the Scripture—a long, continued call from Genesis to Revelation. The gospel invites all who hear it. As Christ and his apostles sought centres of influence, great cities where the people were, so are we to go among the masses of the people and preach Christ.

The Lesson for the younger Ones.

Open with a story of a mother standing in a doorway, calling her child. What would they think if the child would not answer; but, instead, ran farther and farther away? Then tell of Jesus, one of whose names is wisdom, waiting at the door of each heart, to come in. He calls and calls; and yet some of us keep him waiting, and pretend we do not hear. Did you ever hear him? If any say 'Yes,' ask how he called, and what he said. If they say 'No,' teach that he calls now through this lesson, through every Bible lesson, every time the pastor preaches, or mamma tells them about Jesus. He calls some through sickness. He calls when we are well. Don't you think all the good things he gives us are a call, and just because he makes us well enough to enjoy life, is one of the very best reasons why we should love him? What does wisdom say to us? Teach the Golden Text in answer. Does Jesus only love those who love him? Jesus loves not only good children, but bad children also; it is the sin that he hates. There is a difference in the kind of love which Jesus has for those who love him, and those who do not.

—Abridged from the Baptist Teacher.

The bullying manner of the German students is proverbial, as is also their mania for duelling. It was at Heidelberg that a quiet citizen leaving the train said to a swaggering student, 'Sir, you are crowding me! Keep back, sir.' The student turned fiercely, and said, in a loud tone, 'Do you not like it? Well, sir, I am at your service whenever you please!' 'O thank you!' said the traveller. 'Your offer is very kind, and you may carry my valise to the hotel for me.' The student fled amidst shouts of laughter.

The papers report that a Frenchman is teaching a donkey to talk. What we want in this country is a man who will teach donkeys not to talk.