

THE
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ARTICLE XIII.

THE MUSIC OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

From earliest ages music has played a prominent part in the worship and religions of all classes and conditions of men. Beginning with the crudest kind of instruments, many of which are still extant among the heathen nations of the globe, advancing on down through time, progressing and improving as they went, we have to-day the fruits of generations of labor put to our use and enjoyment. The office of sacred music holds a vitally important part in the worship of the Sunday-school. Here, if anywhere in the Christian world, should proper attention be paid to the selection and rendition of music, for here is the fountain-head of the coming generations who in their turn shall collectively rule and govern the Church of the future. And, as it is of a thus great importance, let us look deeper into the matter and see what steps can be taken to benefit the music of the Sunday-school of to-day; and divide into three topics the subject under consideration.

First—The Proper Accompanying Instrument.

Second—The Proper Rendition.

Third—The Proper Selection.

Of all the instruments for use in accompanying the music of the Sunday-school the pipe-organ, of course, towers head and shoulders above anything else. Its solemn, heavy tone, adapted to the voice as no other instrument ever made by man, makes this an indisputable conclusion. But the great expense connected with such an instrument bars many, if not the bulk of Sunday-schools, from obtaining it. I might here hint that frequently organ-builders have second-hand instruments which they have traded in, and which they repair and sell for a very low figure; and it should also be remembered

that a pipe-organ of three or four good speaking stops is better than the average reed-organ of twenty. But if it is not possible to procure such an instrument the next best, and, in fact, only other recourse, is the reed-organ. Many of these have been brought up to a fairly good grade, and, taken as a whole, have the advantage of being exceedingly cheap, in fact some are so cheap it would be impossible to get anything in the musical line, on which a four-part harmony could be played, cheaper. Its sustaining organ-like tone is well adapted to hymn-work, chanting, and all other musical work necessary for the service. Other instruments in the school are decidedly out of place. The piano, for instance, does not lend itself to the class of work at all; and, as stated before, the organ is so much cheaper than the piano, that there can be no excuse for anyone introducing the latter instrument into the service of the Sunday-school.

The most irreverent, not to say ear-splitting instrument, frequently brought into use for Sunday-school music, is the cornet. What could sound much worse than when passing a church where they are supposed to worship the Lord you hear a few voices almost over-topped and drowned by the tone of a big, piercing instrument savoring very strongly of brass-band and political parades. Is there the solemnity about such a service which there should be? Decidedly, *no*. The horn is doing it mechanically; no feeling, expression or any other kind of emotion—just a blare. And why? “Because,” say some, “we must have something to lead us. The organ isn’t a leading instrument, and we must be led.” True; I acknowledge the organ is not a *leading* instrument; that is not its sphere; but there is within every Sunday-school, even among the most unpretentious, something which will lead your school far better than all your cornets and other accessories of a similar nature. This brings us to the second point—the rendition.

Select say a dozen, eighteen or even two dozen boys and girls averaging in age from 8 to 13 years. Form them into a choir; allow each teacher to pick a voice or two from his or

her class. Possibly the teacher may not be musical. That makes but little difference. Any one endowed with the ordinary amount of perception can tell who sings with best voice and most volume. Start such a choir in to sing and hear the result after a very little training. Of late years it has been the custom of Grace Lutheran Church, of Lancaster, of which I am organist, to get up a small class of this kind to sing an anthem at the Christmas festival. Last year there was a class of this kind organized for this purpose and the anthem selected was a moderately difficult setting of "Sing, O Heavens"; which several years ago was used by the full choir with our other Christmas music. This class, organized and drilled by Miss Anna Swartzwelder, one of the Sunday-school teachers, had only four half hour rehearsals. At the festival they rendered the selection; and I am not exaggerating when I say those eighteen or twenty children would have led any chorus of five hundred ever brought together in one room. Children pick up quickly; on the plain hymn-work of the Sunday-school service the rehearsing could be done by merely staying about fifteen minutes after the close of each session. And how much better! How much more reverent to thus sing songs of praise to the Most High; under such leadership to render him praise, and not with lips alone, but with our hearts in the work, such as they will be when we have formed a mighty chorus to the praise of His Holy Name. There is a great deal of the sheep nature in humanity in general; but even more especially in children. Start a few and the balance will follow, be the start for good or evil. This method is within the reach of all; therefore, to those who wish to benefit the music of their school, instead of paying a cornetist, try it. In an incredibly short time you will be surprised with the result.

And now for the last and most important topic—the selection. Our own Sunday-school book contains a fine collection of hymns suitable for every occasion. But, notwithstanding, there are some who have discarded them, and in their place have substituted vile collections of sensational trash

which appear under various names—"Moody and Sankey Melodies," "Gospel Hymns," "Winnowed Songs," etc.; a horrible product, all through, of latter day sensationalism; many bordering on the ridiculous, to put it mildly; many more reminding their hearers of the dance-floor and music hall; some of negro-plantation melodies, notably a much used tune of this kind to that solemn hymn, "Alas, and Did My Saviour Bleed," also many of that swingy 6-8 time, which sound as though they emanated from a hand-organ, and would make far more suitable music for a dancing bear than for a sacred service. There is little use of disputing this fact—Hymns which move the feet will never stir the soul. And it is not the feet of the children which we desire to train; it is their immortal souls we want to impress. Fasten upon their retentive memories some grand old hymn and it will be with them all the days of their lives. Don't forget the *old* hymns. Not the tame sentimentalism of the bulk of the modern compositions, but hymns which were written in those days when to be a Christian didn't mean to go out in best dress on Sunday and be honored for your worshiping; but when it meant to be scorned, reviled, persecuted with untold tortures, murdered by the most fiendish cruelty which devilish ingenuity could devise; hymns written by those who felt their immortal spirit in their work, whose faith was not the mere faith of lips, but whose vows of allegiance to Christ and his Church were sealed with their own life's blood. Hymns which, though their authors have long since joined the silent majority, still speak to us with powerful eloquence, many of them eclipsing some of our most elaborate discourses of to-day, and revealing to our minds why the tortures had no effect at making them renounce their faith. Grand Old Hymns! They have seated and unseated kings; they have brought myriads of souls to that sublime trust and faith in God which we so admire in all those who have rendered up their lives in His service, and now when they come to us as conquerors, shall we cast them aside? No, a thousand times, no. Let us accept them, take them through life as our guides, so that in the end

they may bring us all, as they have done to those in past ages, around the Great White Throne in Heaven. Hymns like "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," on which the foundation of all Lutheranism is built; "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne," the battle hymn of Gustavus Adolphus, "Fear Not, O Little Flock, the Foe"; when one reads a hymn like that he can readily understand how the army fought under their banner feeling "strong in the Lord of Hosts." Then in music of a quieter nature, we have "Abide With Me," "Thine Forever," "Lead, Kindly Light," and hundreds of others, which while not so majestic as the former have brought comfort to many a soul during the sad hours of grief and affliction. Teach the children these fine old poems of song; so that when they grow into manhood and womanhood they may have the inspired sentiments written indelibly upon their memories, and may ever join in raising up their voices to the praise of our Eternal Father, who has given us all our blessings of life, health and his own salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us therefore render to him our best. Nothing else will do. And to His Great Name be all our praise and glory through the endless ages of eternity. Amen.

WM. Z. ROY.

Lancaster, Nov. 9th, 1897.

ARTICLE XIV.

“ LUTHER AND RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION ” ;

OR,

THE ALLEGED INTOLERANCE OF LUTHER IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS.

That the statement of the Psalmist “ There is no God,” torn from its connection, might be used in justification of atheism has been so frequently stated that it will not be necessary to repeat it. Any writer’s views can thus be made to show the opposite of that which was intended.

The mode of quoting statements made by Luther in regard to the Jews by a well known writer, Dunlop Moore, in *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review*,* is of this character. Luther undoubtedly did make use of some of the expressions attributed to him. But he did not use them in the sense implied. It is not mainly the misquotation, the half statement of a truth, or the partial suppression of it, to which we must object, but to the false light in which the whole matter is presented. The writer fails to see that the question of religious tolerance, or in fact of religious views in any form, is not the subject Luther had under discussion in his statements against the Jews. As the Germans say : “ Die ganze Sache ist in ein schiefes Licht gestellt.” It is very much like the image reflected from the peculiarly constructed mirrors found in some railway stations. It is the likeness of the person standing before it. But it is a distorted one. All the features are there and they can readily be recognized. But instead of an indi-

*v. *The Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for January, 1897, Article VII, Luther and Religious Persecution.