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POETRY.

A Turned-Down Page.

There's a turned-down page, as some writer says,
In every human life—
A hidden story of happier days,
Of peace amid the strife.

A folded leaf that the world knows not—
A love-dream rudely crushed—
The sight of a foe that is not far forgot,
Although the voice be hushed.

The far-distant sounds of a harp's soft strings,
An echo on the air;
The hidden page may be full of such things;
Of the things that once were fair.

There is a hidden page in life, and mine—
A story might unfold;
But the end was sad of the dream divine—
It better rests untold. —Selected.

Boil It Down:

Whatever you have to say, my friend,
Whether witty, or grave, or gay,
Condense as much as ever you can,
And say in the readiest way;

And whether you write on rural affairs,
Or particular things in town,

Just a word of friendly advice—

Boil it down.

For, if you go spluttering over a page,
When a couple of lines would do,
Your butter is spread so much, you see,
That the bread looks plainly through.

So, when you have a story to tell,
And would like a little renown;

To make quite sure of your wish, my friend,

Boil it down.

When writing an article for the press,
Whether prose or verse, just try
To utter your thoughts in the fewest words,

And let them be crisp and dry;

And, when it is finished and you suppose
It is done exactly brown,

Just look it over again, and then—

Boil it down.

For editors do not like to print
An article lazily long,

And the general reader does not care
For a couple of yards of song.

So gather your wits in the smallest space

If you'd win the author's crown,

And every time you write, my friend,

Boil it down.

For the "Watchman,"

Church Choirs and Their Improvement.

In this letter I promised to throw out some hints which, if acted upon, would lead to the improvement of church music. But before proceeding to that, I must acknowledge the presence of Memoriter. That individual, probably with the best intentions, seems to think that your humble, unpretentious correspondent is dealing too severely with choirs; and with the remark that what he has to say is based on "wide-spread observation and considerable experience," he proceeds to pounce, like a bird of prey, on the innocent (?) congregation. With outspread wings, expanded talons and whetted beak, he sweeps in through a garret window and makes a perch of the bald heads of "Mr. Snort Bray" and "Mr. Snarles Grumblegrowl;" with his strong wings he frays the craniums of "Miss Squakie Squall" and "Miss Whoopee Yell," and plunges his beak, without the least remorse, into the back hair of "Mrs. Dictatoria Austere!" Yet he thinks I am severe! His good humored review of the congregation is *alas*, too true. That the way of musical culture occasions it, is no longer a disputed point. It is a deplorable fact that so many christians neglect the culture of this most elevating and necessary adjunct to public worship! They do not seem to know that there is such a thing as harmonic and melodic praise. Memoriter draws a faithful picture of the congregational part of church music, but my remarks concern choirs; and as he does not infringe on my rights, but seems rather inclined to run a parallel line, I will proceed and leave him to his task, knowing full well that he has his hands full.

The first essential, after obtaining a good organ and some competent person to handle it, (if a large pipe organ, a man should preside) is to select as many persons as is desired to perform the musical part of the service. My idea is that a quartette is best; a sextette is good; but would not advise a greater number than a double quartette. There are many reasons why a greater number cannot be used to advantage, unless they are musicians, and I am presuming that they are not. This much done, the next step is to secure the services of a thorough musician—one who is considered authority, and whose authority none will presume to dispute. In case the members of the choir do not feel able to pay for the services of a director, the church should do it. If the church needs and values music as an essential auxiliary to the public worship of God, it should be willing to aid and assist the choir in properly preparing themselves by substantial help. I am speaking of volunteer choirs. If those who have been selected, are willing to give their time, the church should be willing to give them the advantage of at least one musician, whose duty it should be to select the music to be used; to preside over and dictate to the organist and choir. To see that every piece to be sung is practiced

CHURCH CHOIRS

are given to unseemly exhibitions of vanity and worldliness in the matter of anthems, solos and "what not."

THANKS, MR. EDITOR, for your kindness in allowing me a hearing, and to you, kind reader, for your patience. *Au revoir.*

SEIRENADE.

For the "Watchman,"

Congregational Singing and

Choirs.

MR. EDITOR: Before dilating upon the above topics, in separate and combined form, ethically and farcically, sententiously and satirically, religiously and ironically, critically, hypocritically and hyperbolically, so as to speak, and will use them as he pleases.

He says: "The churches are full, as a rule, where the music is excellent. This fact may not be very flattering to preachers, but it is a fact; and it is quite a legitimate question whether a church has a right to surrender any attraction that will give it a hold on the respectful attention of the world, especially if that attraction is an elevating one, and in a direct line of religious influence.

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

is well enough in its place and proportions, but very little of the inspiration of music or religion comes through it." But from the major part of past, general experience, it does not seem proper to claim for choirs anything more than that they are "necessary evils." In the present state of musical cultivation, in most congregations, as the only alternative for choir-singing, church music is turned over to the robust but unrefined vocalization which is called, by courtesy—"congregational singing." If one must choose between the undisciplined "hue and cry" of a whole congregation and the better directed efforts of a select *posse* in the organ-loft, there can be no hesitation. Even

THE ORGAN-LOFT

would seem a sweet refuge from the scattering charge of a whole battalion of crude vocalists, male and female, of all ages and of every unusual quality of ear and voice.

which I will now refer to and indicate.

Every true artist, imbued with the spirit of his art, must feel the high and ennobling influence of sacred music. He can no more sing, play or hear fine music, of a devotional character, without having his moral nature elevated and purified, than the sculptor can produce the forms of ideal beauty without the love of it in his soul.

It is the mere charlatanism of art, therefore, to give the name of Music to the flippant, heartless lip-service of vocalists,

who perform in church choirs, in utter unconsciousness of their vocation.

It is upon this contrast between the real sentiment, and the affectation of them, that most of the well grounded objections to choir-singing rest. The organ-loft becomes a flirtation gallery for giggling girls and eager young men. All devotional spirit in art and religion is exercised by more congenial thoughts and attractive pursuits. They are pachydermatous from musical ignorance and consequent musical conceit and have, therefore, nothing to distract them from their attacks on it. If, however, their hides were thinner, they might feel a little worry as to their defenses.

They will say—nay, to be just to them—they will believe, that it is the mere subtilty of art to pretend that one cannot

feel comfortable and in a godly frame

of mind under the prodigious inharmony of unskilled congregational singing.

There is nothing in either their sen-

tations, emotions, or inner consciousness

to notify them of any reason for discom-

fort. You might as well expect one to

feel uncomfortable from bad odors, who

never had any knowledge of the sense of

smell! And you might as well expect one to

be disturbed by inharmonious colors

after having been blind from birth.

So, the brother of this genus, being a plain,

practical man, as he delights to phrase it

—or in the more comprehensive language

of Mr. Snob Grande, "a dosid sensi-

tive fellow, with no begin nonsense about

him,"—confidently relies upon his own

unconscious deficiency of knowledge and

sensibility as the highest "circumstantial

evidence," that the knowledge or sensibili-

ty of others is mere affection. He can-

not be convinced that it is not wholly a

frankin pretence of dilettanteism that puts

a lover of music into such an ungodly

frame of mind over a little lack of polish.

King David with Solomon and the twelve

apostles could not convince him that it is

not the duty and privilege of

SISTER SCREECHOWL

to outrage the feelings of every person

of musical sensibility in the congregation,

(if she conceives herself to have the gift

of music) by lifting up and "letting loose"

her voice bravely, inflexibly and with de-

termination in the Songs of Zion.

No, it is impossible to convince, reform

or "shut up" individuals of this *genus*.

There is no foundation for argument with them. They know that there can be no

such thing as Harmonicon in congrega-

tional singing, for they have never seen

the dead body of music to fall and be