

Transcription of 'Sketch' In the Christian Messenger by 'The Editor'

A Preacher Musician

'I HAVE been living in a musical atmosphere all my life." Such was the thumbnail autobiography confided to our ear by the Rev. W. L. Taylor, of Andover, a little while ago. Such an experience of human existence as is described in these words must, of course, have brought infinite pleasure to the person most affected thereby. In the case of Mr. Taylor, however, others have benefited as a result of the ozone he has inhaled. To the readers of the CHRISTIAN MESSENGER, especially, it has been a good thing that Mr. Taylor's life has been thus encompassed round by the harmonies his ear has been so quick to detect.

For twenty years Mr. Taylor has been the real editor of the musical page in this journal. For several years a similar page appeared in our sister, "Springtime," and Mr. Taylor was also actual editor of this. His has been the hand which has put the finishing touches to many a tune and translated it from Old Notation to Tonic Solfa. At least three hundred and fifty pieces of music have passed through his hands into the hospitality of our print. How much pleasure his labours have brought to those who, when the MESSENGER arrives open the piano or organ and proceed "to try the new tune," we cannot attempt to guess. This pleasure, great as it must have been, is not the only – nor indeed the best - result. Our musical page has been understood to present an opening for the young composer, and quite a number who have since made something of a name in the musical world have found their first publicity within our covers. Somehow Mr. Taylor has attracted to himself a great number of folk who have conceived an ambition to clothe their thoughts in crotchets and quavers, and, having an inborn sympathy with such and an almost inexhaustible store of patience, he has spent hours and hours, which would have been more than irksome to most of us, in criticizing attempts which must often have been crude enough. In this way he has discovered for us many a splendid tune, and, in acknowledging his discovery, given to its composer just that meed of encouragement needed to set him on his rejoicing way to still greater achievements. He has been engaged in this work so long that it is now one of the gladnesses of his life to receive from time to time assurances of gratitude from those whom he has in this way helped to efficiency, and who are not guilty of the all too common sin of forgetting the bridge that carried them over.

But all this work has simply been incidental in a life of musical enthusiasm and activity, which, by the way, have never made him for a moment forget the even higher business of a Primitive Methodist travelling preacher. Had he been just a little less faithful to his ordination vows he had surely turned musical passion into musical fame. His earliest Tonic Solfa certificates bear a date of such antiquity as 1868, and carry the signature of the great John Curwen himself. As a boy he sang at the earliest Temperance Concerts at the Crystal Palace, when it was still thought a wonderful thing that teetotalers could survive the labour of singing for the length of time covered by one of these great festivals. He has held classes in many a village which has become "musical " as a result, and, as a further consequence, experienced some measure of deliverance from that deadly rural dullness which we are constantly assured is one of the great causes of our villages becoming less populous by removal of their young people to the towns. "The Excelsior Reciter," that storehouse of pure and sensible material for harmless entertainment, is a monument to his interest in a field rather wider than that of song. The article on Primitive Methodist Psalmody in "The Choir" was from his pen. Among it all he has been a Sunday school specialist, a minister toiling terribly, a faithful witness for Christ Jesus to many a congregation. Many a choirmaster has he trained, but, better still, many a soul has he won for God!

We have written this article because it struck us that such work as Mr. Taylor has done in this magazine ought to be within the knowledge of its readers, and in telling the story of his labours for THE MESSENGER the other details have somehow slipped in. A tune of Mr. Taylor's very own appears in this number. To him for this and all his other help our very best thanks!

References

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