

## AN INHARMONIUS CHOIR

### The Soprano of Dr. Canfield's Church Says She Was Not Disobliging

When Dr. Canfield, from the pulpit of the Universalist Church of Our Father, on Sunday said that reporters were like Mephistopheles, always trying to breed some trouble and then gloating over it, he evidently had in his mind a very pretty little disagreement that is disturbing the internal harmony of his own well ordered and fashionable congregation. A story has been going the rounds for some time that the soprano of the choir, Miss Edith Wendell, was not quite in accord with her musical associates. It was claimed that she had been disagreeable and disobliging, had refused to sing at one of the church entertainments, and that last Summer, without asking leave from anybody, had gone away to Colorado Springs for a holiday of a month's duration. After sifting the considerable amount of conflicting testimony that is always to be obtained from those who know and those who think they know everything, the facts appear to be as follows:

About three years ago, when Miss Edith Wendell, then of Boston, was engaged as soprano by the Church of Our Father she has as colleague a Miss Tillie Crane, whose contralto voice of considerable sweetness and power blended well with Miss Wendell's pure soprano. When Miss Crane resigned her position to go West with her family, Miss Leverich was engaged to take her place. Miss Leverich has a contralto voice, but she is young and has not had the same amount of musical training and experience that Miss Crane had. The effect of the quartet—consisting of Miss Leverich, Miss Wendell and Messrs. Wiggin and Springmeyer—was not as fine as the musical portion of the congregation had a right to expect for the money they were paying. When small printed slips asking for subscriptions toward the music were placed in the pews for signatures very few of them were signed, and it became necessary to cut the appropriation down.

Miss Wendell was receiving \$1,000 a year, and, conscious of the possession of one of the finest voices in the city and a liberal offer from a South Brooklyn church, she refused to sing for any less amount. About half as much again as Miss Wendell's salary sufficed to pay for the services of the other three singers and organist. It was necessary under these circumstances either to get rid of Miss Wendell or some of the other members of the choir. The musical board, composed of Messrs. Powers, Bacon and Pittinger, canvassed the congregation and came to the decision that Miss Wendell's services should be retained. Mr. A. A. Springmeyer, bass, is a resident of New York, and has accepted a position to sing in a church in that city. The connection of Miss Leverich, contralto, and Mr. S. G. Wiggin, tenor, with the Church of Our Father has been severed, and Miss Wendell has been re-engaged for the coming year.

Miss Wendell was seen this morning by an EAGLE reporter and asked if there was any truth in the charges made against her of being disobliging and of taking a holiday without leave. She said:

"Although my contract says nothing about singing at any of the church entertainments, in all the time I have been with the church I have never refused my

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services except once, and then I was not even invited to the entertainment. It was just before I went to Colorado Springs and I was far from well. I went into the chapel of the church while the festivities were in progress and somebody asked me to sing. I refused partly because I was not well and partly because I had no music with me. The affair was an informal one and I had not been asked to take part. About my going away in the Summer, that is ridiculous. I went to Colorado Springs on December 2 by the positive orders of my physician, Dr. Schenstone, and with the permission of the musical board. Dr. Canfield called on me before I went and told me not to come back until I felt myself quite recovered and strong again. I do not believe any of the congregation wish me to leave, as they have always been most kind and appreciative of my efforts. I receive \$1,000 a year for singing and considering that when I was studying I paid \$6 an hour for lessons I do not think I am at all over paid. I got less when I first came here, but at the end of the first year my salary was raised."

Miss Wendell appeared much hurt at the report having been spread that she was disobliging or hard to get along with, and claims that the fact of her having been re-engaged is sufficient proof that the congregation are pleased at the way she has performed her duties.

When the reporter called at Mr. Powers' house, 153 Lefferts place, that gentleman was not at home. A visit to his place of business, 48 Broad street, New York, met with a like result. Dr. Canfield did not want to say anything, as he thought private matters had nothing to do with the newspapers. One of the members of the congregation, who requested that his name be not published, said:

"I'll tell you all about it. Some of the congregation think that \$1,000 is too much money for any one member of the choir to get, and wanted Miss Wendell either to work for less or leave. Miss Wendell's friends say that owing to the difference in caliber and value of the three voices supporting the soprano the quartet has not been a success. They insist that Miss Wendell is the mainstay of the choir and offer to pay any amount that may be necessary to retain her services. There has been considerable argument over the matter, but it is all settled now and Miss Wendell will remain with us for at least another year.

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Transcribed on 30 Aug 2009 by Karen E. Dau of Rochester, NY