

## THE PRECENTOR.

THE semi-chorus started this morning. A few weeks ago the precentor came, a solitary individual, sounding his key-note in a cold and vacant auditorium. (Oh, Pioneers!) Even when he "gave out the line," all the response he got was a muttering of the groundlings.

"Go away," growled the slug, "why disturb the silence? We were quite happy until you came."

"*I bring the spring,*" carolled the precentor.

"Spring be blowed!" drawled the worm, "we've heard you before—vulgar fellow, butting in in that rude, disturbing way."

"*I bring the spring,*" trilled the precentor.

"Spring!" croaked the beetle, contemptuously, "the old story! Do go away, and don't be silly."

But from his bare pulpit the precentor sang clear—"I bring the spring." And he held to it like the brave, good soul he was. (Oh, Pioneers!)

Morning after morning he came, piping in the half-light, and one by one the congregation came at his call, the solo voice giving place to a tiny, tentative duet, then a trio, a quartet, and, later, a quintet. This morning the single voices are indistinguishable; the semi-chorus has arrived. Later the full chorus will come in the great symphony of May, when every bough will bear its melodist.

What of the precentor? Is it his always to go out

alone, and has he now gone north to blow his call from the still unpeopled brakes?

What of the brave spirits who ever go out alone?

Some day there will come a falter in the precentor's piping. "Ah!" he will say, "I am growing old." Some day he will pipe his tune for the last time, and drop, a little feathered thing, from the bare boughs to the earth. (Oh, Pioneers!)

There he will lie, and the groundlings will nestle and nurture in his bosom.

But the song that will ring over his head, from hedgerow to heaven's gates, will be the song of his piping.