

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 5. VOL. XIV.]

MAY, 1840.

[WHOLE No. 161

SERMON CCLXXXII.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD,
NEW-YORK.

THE CLAIMS OF MUSIC.

"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth !

"Make a loud noise, and rejoice and sing praise.

"Sing unto the Lord with the harp ;

"With the harp, and the voice of a psalm ;

"With trumpets and sound of cornet,

"Make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King."—Ps. 98 ; 4-6.

"It is good to sing praise unto our God ; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely." The voice of joy and the shout of gladness are the proper welcome of a great and gracious sovereign. The loyal heart will exult in the presence of its king. So exults the saint in the presence of Jehovah. "Great is the Lord," he exclaims, "and greatly to be praised." His heart leaps forth in songs of gladness, and rejoices in shouts of triumph. "I will extol thee," he cries, "my God, O King ! and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee : and I will praise thy name for ever and ever." As the exultation of his soul increases, and he feels how poor, how faint, how worthless are his own powers of praise, he calls on all the saints, on all the world, on "every thing that hath breath," on all creation, to swell the shout, and "praise him," their God, "according to his excellent greatness."

Thus David felt, and his bursting heart spake out. "O clap your hands," said he, "all ye people ! shout unto God with the voice of triumph." "Sing praises to God, sing praises ; sing praises unto our King, sing praises : for God is the king of all the earth : sing ye praises with understanding." "Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands ! Sing forth the honor of his name, make his praise glorious." "Let the heavens rejoice,

and let the earth be glad : let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof ; let the field be joyful, and all that is therein."

Let heav'n and earth with rapture leap,
 Let seas their voice employ ;
 Let ev'ry height, let every deep,
 Let fields and woods exulting keep
 A jubilee of joy.

In such a work no power of the human soul should be unemployed. Everything that can excite the sacred merriment of the heart—everything that can help to swell the sound of joy must be brought forth. "Praise him," therefore, he exclaims, "with the sound of the trumpet : praise him with the psaltery and harp : praise him with the timbrel and dance : praise him with stringed instruments and organs : praise him upon the loud cymbals : praise him upon the high-sounding cymbals : let everything that hath breath praise the Lord."

Praise him with the trumpet's tongue, §
 Far and wide resounding :
 Praise him with the harp well strung,
 While your hearts are bounding ;
 Praise him with the sweet-toned lyre, §
 Let his praise the lute inspire, §
 Praise him in a mighty choir, §
 Let his praise be loudly sung.

Praise him with the viol's strings,
 Waking joyous feeling ;
 While the vault of glory rings
 With the organ's pealing ;
 Let the cymbals ring his praise,
 Wake the clarion's grandest lays, §
 Shouts let ev'ry creature raise,
 And proclaim him—King of kings.

Such was the soul of David—such, when he breathed forth the inspired language of the text.

As David felt, so should every ransomed sinner feel. They who, like David, as they turn their eyes backwards, can say, "I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry ; he brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings"—can also say, "and he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." Such are called upon in the inspired language of the text, to engage, with all their powers of voice and heart, in celebrating the praises of their God. More forcibly to impress on all such the exhortation and requisition of the text, allow me to speak of

The origin, the history, the duty, and the uses of sacred music.

Let us then direct our enquiries to

I. The Origin of Sacred Music.

Music has no human father. It claims to have descended from the skies. Man has invented, it is true, ways and means of rendering music more expressive. To Jubal, the sixth in descent from Cain, is accorded, by the inspired record, the high honor of having been "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ." But who was the father of song? From whose prolific mind proceeded first the enchanting ode?

The origin of music is coeval with the human race. It is to be found in the very elements of the human soul. Man is the creature of thought and feeling. He came from the Creator's hands with a heart susceptible of an almost endless variety of emotions, and with the faculty of giving expression to them, so that each emotion might be distinctly known. These emotions may be perceived by the eye, in the diversified aspect of the features of the face, or in the position and posture of the whole, or a part of the frame. It is the ear, however, which most readily perceives, in the accents of the voice, the state and changes of the heart within. All animals to whom God has given the system of respiration, or in whom the lungs and larynx are found fully developed, are possessed of the faculty of voice. By various modifications of these organs, by the expansion or contraction of the lungs, the increasing or the diminishing of the length of the larynx, or wind-pipe, and the action of the epiglot, or covering of the wind-pipe, a great variety of tones may be produced. These tones, by constant and uniform association, become the well-known signs of a particular emotion, or feeling of the heart. Joy and grief, love and hate, hope and fear, peace and rage, contempt and pity, all have their peculiar tones—tones as universally understood as anything whatever pertaining to man. These tones have no provincial meaning: they are nature's language, common to man in every clime and age; and many of them not peculiar to him, but serving as the medium of thought even in the brute creation. These sounds can never fall upon the ear so as to be perceived, without exciting within the human soul the idea of a particular emotion.

"There is in souls a sympathy with sounds;

"Some chord, in unison with what we hear,

"Is touched within us, and the heart replies."

These varied tones of nature are the original elements of music. A combination of these tones after some order, more or less prolonged, is the germ of music—a germ that existed in the first thing that had breath, as soon as it began to breathe.

To arrange these tones in an orderly manner, so as to reduce music to a science, must have been the work of time. And yet scarcely any time could have elapsed after the creation, before the atmosphere was filled with the sweetest music. No sooner had the lark sprung forth at its Maker's word, than it soared

aloft, and poured its sweetest strains upon the air. Every bird became a warbler, ready-taught to join the choir of nature—the vesper-hymn at the first going down of the sun—the symphony in the anthem of “Creation.” Thus ended the fifth day of the Creator’s work. And when on the sixth, obedient to its Lord, the dust of the earth assumed the human form, and receiving the breath of God, became a living soul, the first accents that fell upon the human ear were of the sweetest music, and the first promptings of man’s exulting bosom must have been to join the universal choir. As he gazed on the paradise that spread itself over the earth, and lifting up his eyes to the firmament, beheld the glories of the azure heavens, his soul must have kindled with adoring love and gratitude to God. And this must have been a feeling too sacred, deep, and overpowering for the tame and spiritless enunciation of mere words. The lofty song, in all its grandeur and sublimity, can alone unburden such a heart.¶

Thus the first human pair, before the close of the very day of their creation, must have joined in devout and joyous ascriptions of praise to their bounteous Lord. The first music of the human voice must have been a holy exercise. Sacred song is as ancient as the creation. It holds the precedence over every other. It is the eldest born of all the daughters of music.

But man was not the first to cultivate the sacred art. It was not on earth alone that sweet voices were heard, as the Creator “spake and it was done.” “The morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” Why may not that angelic chorus have been heard in Eden, and its blissful notes prolonged by human tongues ?

“ In heaven the rapt’rous song began,
 “ And sweet seraphic fire
 “ Through all the shining legions ran,
 “ And strung and tun’d the lyre ;
 “ Swift through the vast expanse it flew,
 “ And loud the echo roll’d,
 “ The theme, the song, the joy was new,
 “ ’Twas more than heav’n could hold.”

In that day, when even the Creator himself walked and talked with his earth-born children, the intercourse of the angelic race with the holy inhabitants of Eden may have been vastly more familiar than is usually conjectured. Milton, in his immortal poem, has taken up the thought, and presented us with the beautiful idea of Adam and Eve catching their accents of praise from angel-lips and harps. Adam, as an introduction to their evening worship, thus addresses his beloved spouse :

“ How often from the steep
 “ Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard,
 “ Celestial voices to the midnight air,

And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand ; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances." In their flight from Egypt they had not forgotten their instruments of music. "All the women" brought with them the timbrels, with which, in the house of their bondage, they had been wont to enliven the hour of relaxation.

At Baal-peor, as the cooling spring gushed forth from the rock to slake their burning thirst, no sooner had they drunk, than Israel sang the song of praise to Him who gave them drink. As the father of the Hebrew commonwealth was about to leave the world, Jehovah called upon him and said, "Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel : put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel." "Moses therefore wrote this song (Deut. 32.) the same day, and taught it the children of Israel."

From the days of Moses to the establishment of the Jewish monarchy, the people of God were in a condition too unsettled to expect from their historians scarcely more than a mere notice of battles fought, of triumphs won, of invasions, insurrections, and revolts. And yet, amidst the clash of arms and the roll of drums, we hear the sublime strains of the poetess and prophetess Deborah, so sublime and sweet, as to leave in our minds the assurance, that the art of sacred music was receiving much of the attention and calling forth much of the talent of the people. And this assurance is confirmed, when we hear the devout Hannah, as she presents herself and her infant Samuel before the Lord in Shiloh, pouring forth the gratitude of a fond mother in strains that would do honor to a More, a Hemans, or a Langdon—an honor to which, with all their cultivation, they never aspired. Surely sacred music was not at a very low ebb, when even Hebrew females could thus sing their own songs, and such too as have been hitherto, and will be to all subsequent ages, read and sung with growing admiration. Such mothers were worthy of the Asaphs, and Hemans, and Jeduthans who so shortly after sung so sweetly.

These glimpses of the musical and poetic talents of that age prepare us to behold, with less wonder, a youthful shepherd, on the plains of Bethlehem, discoursing, with harp and voice, music which even at this day serves as the best model of all that is pure, and sweet and plaintive, and joyous, and grand in the sacred science. It was then the female passion to excel in song. For when the same shepherd-minstrel "was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered (responded to) one another as they played, and said,

(Response.) "Saul hath slain his thousands,—
And David his ten thousands."

The children of such mothers could not but be deeply imbued with the love of sacred song. And when David, therefore, on the occasion of the death of Saul and Jonathan, composed that touching dirge known among the people of Israel as "the song of the bow," and bade them teach the children of Judah the affecting lamentation, enough were found as ready to learn as he was to teach. From such children it was an easy matter to select a sacred choir worthy of the minstrelking. When David ascended the throne of Israel, we hear of many a sacred concert. When he brought the ark of the "Lord from Kirjath-jearim, David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets." A people among whom were found, even at the very commencement of David's reign, such a profusion of instruments and players, must have had the love of music instilled into their souls from their very birth.

As we proceed with the history of David, we find him, three months afterward, making the most splendid preparations for the restoration of the ark to its home in the city of David. On this occasion we discover among the Levites, who ministered at the altar, an amazing amount of the best musical talent. As far as can be gathered, there was even then a noble choir "of singers as well as of the players on instruments." "And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren, the singers, with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, sounding by lifting up the voice with joy." "So," we are told, "the singers, Heman, Asaph and Ethan, were appointed to sound with symbols of brass." Others were appointed to direct the psalteries, and others the harps, while "Chenaniah, the chief of the Levites, was for song," and "instructed about the song," or taught the people the magnificent ode which David had prepared for the occasion.

That this choir must have been perpetuated from an early day, and did not then first spring into existence, appears from Numb. 10: 8, 10. "And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. In the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginning of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God." This was the origin, doubtless, of the choir in the Hebrew ritual.

Such a preparation having been made, we are told that "all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the Lord with

shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. And as the ark was deposited in the sacred tent, they lifted up their voice, and sang,

"Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name,
 "Make known his deeds among the people,
 "Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him,
 "Talk ye of all his wondrous works.
 "Sing unto the Lord, all the earth,
 "Show forth from day to day his salvation.

"And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord."

At the command of the king, the sacred choir was reorganized for permanent service. "And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the Lord, and to record, and to thank and praise the Lord God of Israel," "Asaph and his brethren to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required," "and with them Heman and Jeduthan, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the Lord,

'Because his mercy endureth for ever.'

And with them Heman and Jeduthan, with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God."

Under such a king it was to be expected, that the science of sacred music would reach a perfection and extent of practice never before attained. Accordingly we are told, that when, at the close of David's reign, the Levites from the age of thirty years and upward were numbered, "four thousand praised the Lord with instruments which David made to praise therewith." Of these four thousand, "the number of them that were instructed in the songs of the Lord, even all that were cunning was two hundred four score and eight." These chief musicians were divided into twenty-four classes of twelve into each class; and in like manner the remainder of the choir was sub-divided. Each class of twelve had a principal leader, who directed the performances of more than one hundred and fifty musicians, and these formed the daily choir of the sacred service. Each class of one hundred and sixty-six, including its leaders, served one week in course. The whole "Academy" was under the direction of three principal leaders, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthan. All these gave themselves to the study and practice of sacred music. Twice only during the year, save on extraordinary occasions, was each class called out to lead in the devotions of the sanctuary for a week. The interval was occupied in the cultivation of their musical talent. Some are spoken of as teachers, others as scholars. How often they

met together for a "grand union performance" we are not informed. Perhaps on each recurring occasion of three great festivals of the Hebrew church. Of one such performance only is any record preserved.

When Solomon had finished the temple of God in Jerusalem, a day was appointed for its dedication. On this occasion "all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king," and the ark was brought from the city of David, and deposited in the Most Holy place. In this service all the priests and Levites were engaged: "for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course; also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthan, with their sons and their brethren being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets." But who can describe the scene which followed the depositing of the ark? What tongue can tell the grandeur of that song—that

"General burst of joy"—

which was poured forth as the Lord came down to dwell among them? Let the sacred penman speak; none other can. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard, in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets, and cymbals, and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying,

'For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever;'

that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." "And when all the children of Israel saw it, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord, saying,

'For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever;'

Oh! it was a glorious scene—it was the triumph of sacred music; and well did the occasion merit it. Worthy of the mightiest, loftiest, grandest chorus of the thousands of Israel, was the coronation of Jehovah in his palace of cedar, ivory, and gold, on the hill of Zion.

He cometh to set up his throne.
The skies with loud jubilees ring;
Sing praise to Jehovah alone,
Sing praises—sing praises to the King.
Sing praises—he ruleth above,
Jehovah 's the King of the earth;
Sing praise in a chorus of love,
And shout his adorable worth.

Would that we could now be greeted with such a chorus! But the prayer is vain. Never since has the earth witnessed such a scene. The halcyon days, the golden age of music has passed away: they passed with the rending of the robe of Solomon. The science has ever since had its admirers, its patrons, its professors, and pupils; but never till another David shall sit upon the throne, never, perhaps, until the second coming of the Son of David—the millennial age—will those scenes be re-enacted, and that glory surpassed.

Suffer me, then, to pass by the modern history of the sacred science, to speak briefly of,

III. The Duty of Sacred Music. If music has its origin in the human soul, if it is the only appropriate expression of the deep, overpowering, bursting joy of a grateful heart, and if David acted by inspiration in uttering his sacred songs—"the songs of the Lord"—and in the organization of the choir of the sanctuary,—then are the claims of vocal and instrumental music to a prominent place in the public worship of God fully established. How could God himself more plainly sanction this arrangement, than he did at the dedication of the temple? It was when the very skies were ringing with the shouts and peals of joy from that noble choir, that Jehovah "bowed the heavens and came down," and his glory filled the house. Why were the Psalms written but for song? why recorded but for use? and why in the Bible, but for the public praise of God's people? What mean all those eloquent appeals to all the earth, to "make a joyful noise unto the Lord," with which the Psalms abound? Why saith the inspired bard, "Sing unto the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the voice of a psalm: with trumpets and sound of cornets make a joyful noise before the Lord the King?" Is all this for mere effect? Is it all mere poetic license? And are the Psalms of David then to rank no higher than a volume of the "British Poets?"—to be read, admired, and laid aside? Does not God speak in all these Psalms—in all these thrilling appeals for praise? and speak to every reader of the Bible—to every human creature? In what part of the sacred Scriptures does he speak with more force, more eloquence, in more stirring accents? Either, then, throw away the book of Psalms, or acknowledge the claims of sacred music to the exercise of your own powers of mind and heart.

Let it not be said, that the old dispensation has passed away, and with it the claims of sacred music. The Saviour of men came not to destroy either the law, or its devout, soul stirring, and spiritual rites of worship. On the very eve of his crucifixion he joined with his disciples in a song of praise. His followers kept up the same edifying custom. No sooner is a church gathered in Jerusalem, than we behold them assembling daily, with one accord, in the temple, and from house to house,

“praising God” with gladness. Paul and Silas, in the very dungeons of Philippi, “sang praises unto God.” The same Paul commends his own practice to his brethren at Colosse and at Ephesus. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” “Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” To the Corinthians he says, “When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm;” and therefore for himself he says, “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding.” In this passage there is a very plain recognition of the practice of all the early christians, to mingle songs of praise with their supplications in the public worship of God. To this practice abundant testimony is given by the church-historians. Allusion is made to it in the exhortation of Paul to the Hebrews; “By him,” i. e. Christ, “let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, i. e. the fruit of our lips, give thanks to his name.” So also James commends and enjoins the practice. “Is any merry? let him sing psalms.”

Why are we not to give as much heed to these instructions and injunctions as to those which speak of prayer? The one is as truly, if not as frequently, enjoined as the other. Who, then, can plead exemption from the obligation to sing the praises of God in the sanctuary? None, who have the requisite faculties. And who, save the deaf mute, has not? Most confidently I answer, NONE. I say not that all can, without instruction, sing with propriety, or that all can learn to sing with the same proficiency and skill; but that all, who are not afflicted with some physical derangement of the organs of voice, have all the faculties requisite for the practice of song, and may, by proper cultivation, just as certainly learn to sing as to read.

It will be admitted, doubtless, that all who can appreciate the distinctions of musical sounds, and have the organs requisite for the production of those sounds, can learn to sing. All the distinctions of musical sound may be reduced to three: force, time and tune. Force refers to the different degrees of loudness with which a sound is made. Every ear can determine whether a word is pronounced, or sung, loud or soft. All, then, can appreciate accent in music. Time refers to the rapidity with which sounds are uttered. Every mind is familiar with the distinctions marked by the epithets, slow and fast. No ear can fail to perceive the difference between the slow measured movement of a pendulum, and the rapid ticking of a watch. Indeed every man, every day, gives evidence, in a thousand instances, of his perception of the different measures of time, and so all have the second qualification in distinguishing sounds. The perception of tones, too, is a common characteristic of

man. There is not a human being who has the faculty of hearing underanged, that cannot distinguish, and instantly too, between the hearty laugh and the plaintive cry. But the laugh is produced principally by the reception, in quick succession, of two sounds, which differ from each other a single tone; while the cry is produced by a similar utterance of two sounds, differing but half a tone. Let any individual attempt to call another with any energy, and at once the voice glides up to an eighth, or to the commencement of another octave; while a common call will produce the change of a sixth. In the frequent occurrence of yawning, the voice descends an octave. In like manner, a cough may be accurately expressed by musical intervals. In common conversation the voice glides through all these intervals. A question can scarcely be asked without the use of that change of tone which musical science calls a fifth, sixth, or eighth. And it is the perception, on the part of him to whom the question is addressed, of this change of tone, that enables him to determine that the sentence calls for an answer. If a speaker could possibly utter, for any length of time, a succession of monotones, there would be no ear in the assembly that would not instantly perceive it, and none that would not be sensible that it was ridiculous. All, therefore, who can thus appreciate or perceive these distinctions of musical sound have an ear for music—an ear that may be cultivated almost indefinitely.

But have all a voice for music? Most certainly, if they can speak at all. There is not a man who, in common conversation, does not glide through the whole gamut; not a man who can confine himself to the same unvaried tone in animated discourse. It is just as natural for him to raise or lower his voice to impede or quicken his speech, and to produce all the usual variations of tone, as it is for him to speak at all. The only difference in these respects between common discourse and singing is, "that in the latter case the individual sounds are given separately and prolonged, without gliding into another, whereas in the former no sound is individually prolonged, but just touched and melts into another." William Gardiner, in his "very able work on the Music of Nature," of which it has been said that "it would be difficult to name a work in the language, combining, in so high a degree, acute observation, philosophical analysis, and apt illustration," while he admits that "some persons have a greater aptness for the vocal art than others," expressly affirms that "there is not a voice, however stubborn, but what may be rendered sufficiently pliant to perform with accuracy the notes of the diatonic scale."

That this is not mere theory has been abundantly established by satisfactory experiment. In some parts of Germany every child is taught to sing as well as to read. And their teachers affirm "that no child is ever found incapable of vocal and instrumental performance." In Prussia every child must be sent

to school, and there must learn to sing. "Even the peasants in some parts of Germany," says Dwight, "pass many a leisure hour with the guitar or piano for their companions." "I once stopped," says another traveller, "at a German settlement of no great size, where I was invited to hear some music at the house of a mechanic. Here a small company performed, vocally and instrumentally, almost the whole of Haydn's 'Creation.' The master of the house, a blacksmith, more than sixty years old, took the first violin. His aged wife, in spectacles, gave us a vocal part. The eldest son, a joiner from a neighboring village, sat down at a Leipsic piano forte, on which, after having tuned it, he then executed with great skill the whole accompaniment. Several young men and women filled the remainder of the score. A boy five years of age was pointed out to me as beginning to play on the violin. On inquiry, I found that there was not a house in the town without a piano forte, or some keyed instrument. It may be stated as a general fact, that every house in Germany and Switzerland has some musical instrument."

The professors in the Boston Academy of Music affirm "that of all the pupils under their care, (amounting in 1834 to 2,200,) they have never yet found the individual absolutely destitute of the power necessary for learning music." One of the principal leaders in the New York Academy of Sacred Music has publicly testified, after having instructed thousands during a period of more than twenty years devoted to musical instruction, that all his observation is to the same effect. "Go," he says, "into the well-regulated infant-school, and among some hundreds of pupils you will find only here and there an individual whose voice is wholly unformed; select the very worst of these for special training, and all without exception are found to improve more or less rapidly." "Having visited many infant-schools in different parts of the country," says a writer in the Christian Spectator, "we have never yet found a child who was unable to sing after he had been in the school a proper length of time."

With these facts in view, I cannot hesitate to ascribe the power of music to the whole human family, with the exception already named. And if the Creator requires of every creature to love and serve him with all their mind and strength, who can question the duty of those to whom God has given this faculty of music to cultivate and use it in the praises of the Almighty? Yes,

"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord."

Finally and briefly, let me advert to some of

IV. THE USES OF SACRED MUSIC. Not to speak of its effects upon the health, which are most beneficial, and upon the animal spirits, which are of the happiest kind, I would simply refer to its effect upon the heart. "Pure and simple music,"

says Plato, "is the sister of bodily exercise; as exercise imparts health to the body, so music imparts self-government to the soul." Martin Luther, than whom none, scarcely, have been, in modern days, more efficient patrons of sacred music, says, "The youth must always be accustomed to this art, for it makes men kind and virtuous." Mr. Woodbridge, editor of the "Annals of Education," relates that "the effect of introducing music into one of the villages of German Switzerland, upon the entire moral character of the people, was immediate and striking. They relinquished drinking, riot, and debauchery, and all disreputable amusements, to join in musical recreation. And villages before noted for nothing but ill, became distinguished for sobriety, order and purity."

It has already been remarked that music has ever been regarded as a most appropriate vehicle of praise. The exercise of the art, therefore, is adapted to awaken that feeling of the soul, with which it is so intimately associated in the pious bosom. The association of certain feelings with their peculiar tones is so intimate that we can scarcely hear the latter without having the former stirred up. The plaintive cry awakens pity and compassion. The lover of the dance can seldom hear the strains of the viol without an inclination to move with corresponding step. The veteran soldier hears the bugle-call, or the rolling of the drum, and at once his bosom beats for the tented field. Who has not heard of the wondrous effects of the Tyrolese song, or Marsellaise Hymn? Who has not felt a patriot's blood grow warm while "Hail Columbia" was poured forth from a thousand hearts? So, too, the lovers of sacred song are often stirred to rapture when the lofty and solemn tones of the noble organ, or the full burst of praise from the great congregation, fall upon their ears. Then, if ever, the Christian feels that he can pour out all his soul to God.

But the influence of sacred music in the family circle is no less delightful. Who can help but recognize the lineaments of peace and joy in that scene so graphically drawn by the Scottish bard:

"The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
The big Ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;
Of strains, that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And 'Let us worship God! he says with solemn air.

"They chant their artless notes in simple guise,
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim;
Perhaps Dundee's wild warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive Martyrs, worthy o' the name."

How is the soul drawn upward by such a picture! How much more when we take our seat by that "ingle," and not only hear the very strains themselves, but mingle our voice with that of the good old sire and his bairns! Soul-stirring scene! Oft may its power be experienced!

We have seen an audience carried, as it were, upon a mighty wave, as some noble anthem has thundered forth the grandeur of our God, or whispered to the soul the melting notes of Calvary. Yea, when that favorite of Martin Luther and of the whole church, good "Old Hundred," has fallen on our ears from the lips of thousands beneath the sacred dome, and we ourselves have mingled in the song, it has seemed, indeed, as if

"Our souls, on wings sublime,
Rose from the vanities of time,
And drew the parting veil to see
The glories of eternity."

Sacred music, practiced by the Christian, makes him happier, better. When performed in secret, it dispels the gloom of depression, quiets the sea of turbulence, and prepares the soul to come into the presence of its Maker with a livelier, holier joy. In the family circle it checks the wildness of the young, melts away the barriers of passion, and unites the kindred group in heavenly devotion. But it is chiefly in the great congregation that its full power is felt; or would be felt, if our congregations, having taken time and pains to learn this sacred science, would pour forth their swelling tides of harmony in the song of praise. "Methinks," said Baxter, "when we are singing the praises of God in great assemblies, with joyful and fervent spirits, I have the liveliest foretaste of heaven upon earth; and I could almost wish that our voices were loud enough to reach through all the world and to heaven itself."

Thus the practice of sacred music is admirably fitted to prepare the soul for the enjoyments of the world of glory. When John was favored with a glimpse of the upper sanctuary, he found them all engaged in chanting that noble anthem: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty!"—and this is no sooner ended, than they take up the strain, "Thou art worthy, O Lord!" These chants ended, they take their harps and sing a new song: "Thou art worthy, for Thou wast slain!" "And I beheld," says John, "and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the priests and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb!' and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory!' After this I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, and cried with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our God!' " whereupon all the angels swell again the mighty chorus, "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom!" And yet again he listens. And now the martyr-host appear. "And they sing the songs of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty!' " "And after

these things I heard," he says, "a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, 'Alleluia! Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power!' And a voice came out of the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all ye his servants! and ye that fear him, both small and great!'" After this expressive solo follows another chorus—the "Hallelujah Chorus,"—"the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, 'Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!'"

Thus, anthem after anthem, and chorus after chorus, peals from the upper temple. There all is praise, and none are silent.

"Seraphs, with elevated strains,
Circle the throne around;
And move and charm the starry plains,
With an immortal sound."

With them we hope to dwell—with them to praise. And how can we consent to forego even here the bliss of heaven? Why does not every blood-bought soul catch something of that inspiring theme, that fills all heaven with joy? why not now learn and exercise that holy art, which fills angelic hosts and ransomed saints with rapture? Has he the soul of a saint, who has no sympathy with the saints in bliss, no desire to anticipate their joy? I wonder not that the devotees of Mammon and of Mars, of Thespis, and of Bacchus, are deaf to the praises, and dead to the allurements of sacred song. Yes,

"Let those refuse to sing,
Who never knew our God;
But favorites of the heav'nly King
Should speak their joys abroad."

Wake up, then, ye ransomed ones! awake to bliss. Behold what a fountain of joy is yet sealed up within your bosom. Break those seals, and let the living streams gush forth. Re-press no more the rapturous emotions of a glad spirit. Kindred of the skies! drink in their rapture who dwell by the river of the water of life. Ye who minister at the altar! take of the living flame that is there kindled by the breath of God, and kindle up in the heart of every worshipper the fire of holy love, the flame of sacred, rapturous praise. And ye, to whom God has given the high trust of training the souls of your own offspring for the skies; ye Christian parents! bring those little ones, while yet they scarcely lisp, and teach their infant lips to sing "Hosanna!" Let the incense of praise ascend to God from the altar of every sanctuary, household and heart.

"In one mighty choir,
All creatures! unite,
His praise to respire,
By day and by night;
Ye heirs of salvation!
His praises record;
O'er all the creation,
Oh! praise ye the Lord!"