

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

### THE SONGS OF THE CHILDREN.

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The children are all songsters, singing more or less articulately according to the natural gift they have. Some inherit a fine ear and a delicate taste; others an ear less accurate and a taste less nice, yet they all sing or endeavour to sing. I visited a class in school the other day where the children were being exercised in singing *descriptively* on the *Kindergarten* principle, and all the class took part. They were the smallest children in the school, and I noted this fact, that though some among them were very dull and evidently sick, yet they were so aroused and wakened up as to swell the volume of song, however discordant their notes. All children love to sing, unless they are really sick, and that, with them, is always "the little rift within the lute" that for the present "makes the music mute." Let them be well, and they sing as the larks sing, with swelling, gleeful, thrilling notes. And what a joy it is to hear them! When the late dearly-loved H. W. Longfellow was sojourning in El Pardillo, in Spain, in 1827, one day at the church door he heard the village children, led by the priest, singing

"Ave, Regina cœlorum,  
Ave, Domina angelorum."

whereupon he observes: "There is something exceedingly thrilling in the voices of children singing. Though their music be unskillful, yet it finds its way to the heart with wonderful celerity. Voices of cherubs are they, for they breathe of Paradise; clear, liquid tones, that flow from pure lips and innocent hearts, like the sweetest notes of a flute, or the falling of water from a fountain."

This love for song in children presents an important and at the same time an easy means of education. The song awakens the heart and makes the inmost sanctuary of the soul accessible, and more than that, it bears into it the burden of the song and places it in safe-keeping there. And being there, its rhyme and its rhythm together serve to make it memorable. It has in its very nature many points of contact with the child; its music affects its emotions; its rhyme and rhythm fix it in its memory; its substance being, as Sir Philip Sidney phrases it, "the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge," appeals to the intellect. Granted that the song is a worthy one, it is impossible to tell the influence it may exercise on the nature, not only in childhood but throughout the entire life. What song implants is often revived, for there is an unwearied repetition of it, song being really the only thing of which the child never tires. It is ever new to him. The glory of the rising sun always rests upon it. Its beauty, sweetness, attractiveness never fade; it only becomes with the passing years more tender, more pathetic, more winsome. I heard a missionary tell of old men, in the backwoods of Muskoka, who had not had religious service for a long time in their neighbourhood, weeping as children as they sang the hundredth Psalm. Ah, it brought back the early home, and the happy days of youth, and a thousand sacred memories. It opened afresh the old fountains of the soul. And have we not read of men who had sunk into depths of vice being recovered by the accidental hearing of one of the old hymns or psalms, learned long ago at home? Through it the mother's hand reached the poor wanderer and led him back to the old paths of pious living. Through it he had again a glimpse of gladness he had once enjoyed in the sacred citadel of man's best strength—home. There is an unquestionable power in song for the highest and noblest educational purposes. It lays its spell on all hearts, a spell that may be quieted in certain circumstances, but is never broken. It was on this account that Luther, in his far-seeing and clear-seeing way, said, "Music must be kept up in the schools. A schoolmaster must be able to sing, otherwise I will not look at him. Nor should young men be ordained preachers until they have been well tried and exercised in the school." And it was because of the notable effects produced by what is sung that Luther began to write hymns as the vehicles of the gospel. So did Charles Wesley. Every revival of religion has given birth to new life of the soul, and these hymns have both carried and conserved the precious truth, making the movement more enduring than, without them, it would have been.

This fact, which might be abundantly illustrated from the histories of all religious movements, should be intelligently acted upon for the betterment of the rising generation.

No one will question the softening, sweetening, refining, and elevating influence of music. It does all that Luther claimed for it. "It drives away the devil and makes men joyful. Through music one forgets all anger, impurity, pride, and other vices." This may be full of mystery to us; but John Henry Newman, the cultured and philosophic thinker, gives us this satisfactory reason, after speaking of the strange effects it produces: "Can it be that those mysterious stirrings of heart, and keen emotions, and strange yearnings after we know not what, and awful impressions, from we know not whence, should be wrought in us by what is unsubstantial, and comes and goes, and begins and ends in itself? It is not so; it cannot be. No; they have escaped from some higher sphere, they are the outpouring of eternal harmony in the medium of created sound; they are echoes from our home, they are like the voice of angels, or the magnificat of saints, or the living laws of divine government, or the divine attributes; something are they beside themselves, which we cannot compass, which we cannot utter—though mortal man, and he perhaps not otherwise distinguished above his fellows, has the gift of eliciting them."

When music, with its wondrous witchery, is wedded to noble words, what power it wields? When the charming air has a sentiment suitable to it, it is doubly mighty. This it behooves all interested in training children carefully to give heed to. In teaching a gospel song or hymn, you are planting not for the hour or the day, but for eternity. You are opening in the soul a fountain of joy that will never cease to flow; therefore choose the best, that which will ever speak of the living way, the loving Lord, the eternal inheritance, all that will purify the heart, and speak peace to the conscience, and bring blessing to the soul. Miss Elliot's well-known hymn, "Just as I am," or Toplady's "Rock of Ages," or Charles Wesley's "Jesus, lover of my soul," all describe the living way. No child should lack these precious portions of the poetic truth. They are the pure gospel of the loving Lord. Bernard's "Jesus, the very thought of thee," or Luther's "A safe stronghold our God is still," and their like, enthrone Christ Jesus in the heart as all in all. On the Christian's inheritance, the translation of an old Latin hymn, "Jerusalem, my happy home," or Bernard's "Jerusalem the golden," or Baker's "There is a blessed home," or their like, fill the thought with wholesome conceptions of the "home over there." And what multitudes there are of other sweet songs dealing with the entire circle of truth! Let the children learn them and sing them. In a proper hymn there is a large culture for the growing nature; so large that we regard that man, whoever he was, as speaking a profound truth when he said, "Let me make all the ballads, and I care not who shall make the laws of the nation."—*The Sunday School World.*

### WORK.

There is nothing can be accomplished in the church, or in the world to-day, without hard, prosaic, steady work all the time. And we might almost say, that there is nothing which we desire to accomplish, in the church or in the world, that we cannot succeed in by steady work. This is what is needed in pastors and people to-day in the church. Not only meetings, not chiefly meetings, but honest work day by day. The pastor has plenty to do, far more he sees to be done than can be done. He needs the co-operation of all in the church. Here, also, we have cause to be thankful for many willing hands, and kind Christian hearts, that are helping in the harvest field. But alas! many are sitting idly looking on. How aggravating to the farmer when he can get no one to help in the harvest field. Do you never think how heart-breaking it is to the diligent pastor, to be at his wits' end for help in all the departments of congregational activity. Oh do not let the harvest be lost. Go out into the field. Lay hold of the careless. Bring some neighbour to church. Put a Bible into some irreligious home. Lead some child to the Sabbath school. Throw the arm of loving sympathy round the young. Don't sit and scold the young for carelessness; go and speak kindly to them. Fill up the empty seats in the prayer meeting. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, and you will find a blessed

reward in so doing. Such are some of the marks of a living church. It is a Bible-loving church; it is attractive, it is liberal, it is diligent and aggressive, and it is prosperous, and increasing in its influence, and its numbers, and its spirituality; and it takes away the reproach that rests on the cause of God. Always remember, you who are as yet unsaved, who are dead, who are burdened with a sense of guilt, that Jesus is ready and willing to save you. He desires to save the guilty. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Do not be discouraged because of the past. Forgetting the things that are behind, press forward to a better life. Redeem the time that remains. There is yet time to show the sincerity of your repentance by your diligence and zeal in the work of the kingdom. And they who are forgiven much are they who love much, and who know how to show it. But let us remember always that a living church is the work of God, and of Him alone. His Holy Spirit dwelling in the hearts of His people is the source and spring of all spiritual life. And we must ask for the outpouring of His spirit on us in all our work. His apostles could do nothing until they were endued with power from on high. The church is too much forgetting the source of her power and life. Let us not do so. The power we need is at our disposal. Ask and ye shall receive. This power from on high is more and stronger than all human zeal, and talent, and activity. This power makes feeble instruments mighty to pull down the strongholds of the wicked one, and mighty to build up the church. Let us lift up our hearts unto God from whom cometh our aid. The Holy Spirit loves the church, even as Jesus does, and will not withdraw from those who rely on His mighty power.—*The Rev. D. D. McLeod.*

### COMFORTING AND ENCOURAGING.

There is a great deal of evil in the human heart. The best of people offend and go astray, and have need of warning and reproof. At times condemnation and denunciation are imperatively demanded. Human pride is to be humbled. The impenitent are to be warned. And the consequences of wickedness in all its forms are to be clearly stated. *The final judgment and the pains of hell are not to be hidden from view. Of all this we have examples in both the Old and New Testament.*

But at the same time we are to keep in mind the infirmities and weaknesses to which many are subject and the temptations with which they are beset. Even among the most devout Christians there are those who are almost continually writing hard things against themselves. Their hopes are hardly ever bright. They go mourning all their days. To the consolations of the Gospel amid the burdens and sorrows of life they are well nigh strangers. The consequence is, they do not magnify the grace of God in their experiences, and are nearly useless in Christian work. Such as these have great need of encouraging words and kindly attentions from Christians around them, and especially from pastors and elders. Prophets, apostles, and Christ himself, made all such the subjects of peculiar care and anxiety, seeking to comfort them in all their sore troubles and to encourage them to put their trust in God and to go forward in His strength. Even the wayward may be often restrained and brought back by tender solicitude, who would be driven farther and farther away if left without being told of Christ's love and of His willingness to receive even wanderers. And the same principle holds good with regard to the treatment of the impenitent. It is not enough to show them their sin and guilt, they must also know the way of escape; it must be made plain to them; and they must be importuned by the love of Christ to turn and live. The love of God as manifested in the gift and sacrifice of His own Son for sinners, must be apprehended before they can believe to the saving of the soul. To bring them to the cross and lead them to look to Christ as the bitten Israelite looked to the brazen serpent, demands all the encouragement that can be given. Then it is that tender solicitude is especially powerful.

The Gospel deals with Christians as weak and fallible mortals having continual need of the great Physician and also of the balm in Gilead; while it corrects by rebukes, it also heals by grace. And while in the preaching of the Gospel sin is to be denounced and repentance made essential, yet according to the teachings of Christ and His apostles great care is to be taken in comforting and strengthening the weak, as well as in