

Another prerequisite for the performance of the duty of praising God by all the people, is a *willing mind*. Many more people are unwilling to sing than are unable to sing. Some have got out of the habit of singing; some do not feel like singing; some will not sing because others are singing; some are afraid to sing; some are ashamed to sing; some are too proud to sing; some do not sing because a mock modesty tells them they sing better than most, and that if they sing everybody will be listening to them; and some do not sing because they wish to enjoy the harmonies and skillful executions of the choir, or to criticise their discords and failures. In looking over a congregation during singing, I have seen before me musical ability enough, and more than enough, to fill the house with melody; but the willing mind was wanting; and though God was bending his ear to catch their praises, there was silence nearly the same as in an assembly of the dumb. Ah yes! there must be willingness to sing; the hearty willingness of each man, woman, and child to do what they can, denying self, and putting off the fear of man, or the duty of praising God by all the people will not be done.

And one other prerequisite to the duty of praising God by all the people is the *permission of the choir*. The choir in some churches is the first estate of the realm; supreme, in majestic dignity and authority, over the pulpit and the congregation. There are many churches in which the command of God to all the people to praise him cannot be obeyed, because the choirs have the congregations by the throat, and say to them, "You shall not sing a note, under penalty of our grand displeasure!" condescendingly adding, "Little people should be seen, not heard." Of course, under such a *regime*, neither pastor nor people can praise God except by *permission*. How this permission is to be obtained, where it is denied, by a petition for a restoration of rights, or by a *coup d'etat*, as in France, followed by the guillotine, or a decree of banishment against the tyrants, the people must determine. And, to my thinking, when mild remonstrances are scorned, any measure, not in itself sinful, may be used by a people against a choir that has gagged them into silence, to get back their right to praise God. I have seen congregations assemble in the spirit of true devotion, having it in their hearts, and almost bubbling from their lips to praise God as with one voice, and whose wish was when the hymn was given out, "O that it was permitted us here to sing!" or "O that the choir would sing something we know, and in which we could join!" But the law of that church was that the choir alone shall sing; or, the choir sing something the people do not know, are not expected to know, are not even desired to know; and there the congregation sit or stand *voiceless*, staring at their books like silent fools, the spirit of praise dying out in their hearts, and in the hearts of not a few a spirit of malediction rising that

utters curses, not loud but deep, against the wrong. The blindness of choirs to the profane injustice of not permitting the people to praise God; and to the exceeding folly of making men and women angry prejudicial critics before performing before them, is most amazing. With this, however, here, I have nothing to do; only with the fact, that, where it exists, the prerequisite of permission from the choir must be obtained before the command of God to all the people to praise him can be obeyed.

The three prerequisites are "ability," "willingness," "permission;" a congregation possessing all these is in a condition to receive the command:—*Let all the people praise the O God; let all the people praise thee!*

WHY SPURGEON CAME TO SCOTLAND.

It appears that the congregation presided over by Dr Begg have lately added to their church and school a manse. Their pastor who, before the Disruption, was minister of the neighbouring parish of Liberton, resided till a few months ago on a property which he had purchased there, and which was some three miles from Edinburgh. This however conducive to health, was by no means favourable to the Dr's circumstances. He had to be often in town, and his family were far from school; and all things considered, it was thought advisable that a manse should be got in the city. The Dr rarely fails in anything he puts his hand to, at least if it can be accomplished by shrewdness, sagacity, and perseverance. In a short time a sum was raised sufficient to warrant a purchase, and a villa was bought in the suburb of Grange, which, first and last, has cost, I understand, nearly, if not altogether £2000. The congregation is not a wealthy one, but seems to be surprisingly willing, for by dint of hard draining amongst themselves and their friends, that sum has been nearly made up. There were numerous soirees and sermons, and not very long ago Dr. Guthrie preached in Newington Church for the same object. All this may be said to be quite fair, and in a way it is, but there is a way of fishing up subscriptions which, though nobody says much against it, and the end is presumed to justify the means, is not very delicate, and, to speak plainly, not very gentlemanly. There are many men who, if taken by the buttonhole, and worked upon in the proper way, give a sovereign either to get rid of the nuisance, or to save the charge of niggardiness. All means, however, had been exhausted, and money was still needed at Newington Church, which could not be easily procured. Dr. Begg had made the acquaintance of Mr. Spurgeon, and the idea struck him that if he could get the famous preacher down to Scotland there would be a large addition to his funds, with very little trouble. But the Dr. did not choose, for what reason he knows best