

childhood, while all the wide space between that and the present hour is a blessed and forgotten waste. You have perchance seen an old and half-obliterated portrait, and in the attempt to have it cleaned and restored, you may have seen it fade away, while a brighter and more perfect picture, painted beneath, is revealed to view. This portrait, first drawn upon the canvass, is no insipid illustration of youth; and though it may be concealed by some after design, still the original traits will shine through the outward picture, giving it tone while fresh, and surviving it in decay.

Such is the fireside—the great institution furnished by providence for the education of man. Having ordained that man should receive his character from education, it was also ordained that early instruction should exert a decisive influence on character, and that during this important period of existence, children should be subject to the charge of their parents. The sagacity and benevolence displayed in this design afford a striking manifestation of that wisdom and goodness which we behold in all the works of God. It appears that, in every stage of society, parental education adjusts itself to the wants of children. In the savage state, where there is no division of property, no complicated system of laws and relations, no religion, save the naked idea of a God who rewards the good and punishes the wicked, education has a narrow scope; but such as is needed is supplied. As society advances into civilisation, duties multiply and responsibilities increase; there is then a demand for higher moral and intellectual culture. Providence has foreseen and provided for this necessity, for with the advance of refinement and knowledge the family circle is drawn closer together, and the solicitude of parents for their children, and their influence over them, are proportionably increased. Thus, while in a rude age children are left, almost like the untutored animals, to make their own way, when knowledge is diffused, and the light of religion spread abroad, then it is that enlightened education becomes necessary, then it is that parental education becomes vigilant, and then it is that children are most completely subjected to the influence of parents.

In a state of society like ours, it involves a fearful responsibility, but we cannot shrink from the fact: parents usually decide the character of their offspring. It is ordained by heaven; children will obey the lessons given them at the fireside. As the stone hurled from the sling takes its direction and finds its resting-place at the bidding of the arm that wields it, so the child goes forward, and finds its grave in peace or sorrow, according to the impulse given at the fireside.—From "Fireside Education."

Concluded from our last.

#### CONGREGATIONAL PSALMODY.

In animadverting on the tunes which enjoy a traditional popularity, we cannot pretend to give a complete index expurgatorius. Perhaps we have not signalised the greatest criminals. Let every body turn informer for himself, and they will soon be denounced. Let him see how often whining insipidity has been mistaken for pathos—portness and familiarity for gracefulness—and bombast for majesty—while sometimes nothing but the supposition of a fortuitous concurrence of notes will account for the tunes in which they occur. But it must be remembered that there can be no discrimination exercised if the attention is still to be exclusively occupied by the same tunes. It must be by familiarity with those not ordinarily heard in our chapels, that a taste can be created for them; and this may come to have an expulsive power fatal to the popularity of many of our present favourites.

We have said that the principal effect of psalmody depends on the belief entertained by those who engage in it of their common sincerity. The liability to impression in each member being in proportion to the mass he believes to be sympathising with him. It might safely be said that psalmody can have no faults except those which impair this community of feeling or prevent its recognition. All that we have instanced do one or both of these, as a little reflection will make evident. The harsh predominance of one voice straining itself, often in a vain effort to keep a congregation to the tune is likely to operate both ways. The censurable attempts of many persons to sustain a part, for which they have not the requisite musical skill, nor perhaps the right quality of voice, must mar the effect of the whole on all who are unfortunate enough to be within their range. Countertenors uncertainly flickering over the scale, till a happy accident confirms their confidence by bringing them in tune—basses jarring the ear by unallowable discords—and the well-meant but not benevolent attempts of those to whom nature has given neither voice nor ear for music, are all disturbing causes to every body but those who present them.

We judge of a man's earnestness, in great part, by the 'expression' he gives to his enunciation. A friend professing his regard with as little emphasis, as if he were giving his opinion of the weather or asking the time of day—a multitude testifying their loyalty to a present sovereign by lisped and heartless tokens of welcome; would be ludicrous hypocrisies. We may make ourselves certain, that devotion is dying when hosannas languish on our tongues. But beyond vigorous shouting, or occasionally an almost inaudible monotony, what 'expression' do the generality

of our choral efforts exhibit? And what is expressed by these more than the fact that the congregation does or does not enjoy the tune? It would be credulous to think emotion of any kind was manifested. 'Expression' is resolvable into degrees of quickness or slowness, loudness or softness. The two first, must of course, be maintained uniformly through the whole tune: though it may be altered to accommodate the sense of the next verse if necessary, according as that may be calculated to animate us or to soothe the voice into a slow and pensive cadence.

We may distribute the force of our voice as we please over the whole melody—throwing it into whatever bars or even notes we choose; as best suits the sentiment to be conveyed. But we are writing as though people required to be taught all this. As if mothers depended on the instruction of professors for the mode in which they might best indicate their love for their children—as if no man knew when to speak fast or loud, or on what words to lay stress, until he had qualified himself by pains-taking and tuition. As in reading or speaking, let us know what we mean, speak distinctly and be in earnest, and we may trust to nature for all besides. These things are not artifices, or elocutionists and rhetoricians would do something more than name their tools—they would earn the credit of making them. How is it, then, that our practice does not exemplify the same great instincts which concern both singing and speech? It would be indecent and manifestly false, to explain this by the absence of sincerity. The great majority of those who sing in our congregations may fairly be supposed to adopt, for the time at least, the sentiments they utter, and, therefore, might be expected to evince the ardor and depth of their feelings by their manner of declaring them. The deficiency in our opinion may be accounted for, by the obstacles which radically bad tunes oppose. They express no feeling, and, therefore, need no 'expression.' The cure then is to be found in the substitution of the good for the bad. By the use of those which admit and invite expression, the taste and skill will unconsciously develop themselves. Nevertheless, until that time arrive, there will be a great advantage in pursuing the means we have to recommend.

We believe the ancient objection to the use of organs is wearing away in our denominations. They are felt to be not only appropriate from the very quality of their tones, but a great assistance to the psalmody of congregations too large to allow their voices to be drowned by the volume of their sound. They lead great numbers more effectually than can be accomplished by any one man. We think there is another advantage to be derived from their use—they would operate beneficially on the taste of those who employed them. Tunes which we are content to sing, would become intolerable when their jingling passages and meagre harmonies were heard from an instrument that would so plainly reveal their real character. Although, it must be confessed, that bad taste has often continued to preside in defiance of them.

Reformations rarely if ever begin in the multitude. Defects however enormous are submitted to for ages without suspicion until perceived by those who have the power of influencing the mass. In no other way we conceive can our psalmody undergo a complete reform. It is, therefore, to those whose character and position give them weight in our congregations, that we address ourselves. The few bright examples of what may be done to rescue our psalmody from the censures passed upon it by all qualified judges out of our pale, have been thus created. It might be invidious to name them. The practicability and aptness of the means we have to recommend have been proved in the instances we allude to, where success in the next degree to perfect has crowned the efforts of the few.

The principal features of the plans adopted in these cases have been, the banishment of the volumes which have so long maintained an injurious supremacy—the employment of the collection under review—and the establishment of meetings for the practice of psalmody during the week. A sufficient number of people have thus been rendered familiar with the new tunes, and capable of singing all with accuracy. The gentlemen who have assumed the direction of these meetings have proceeded gradually. Correctness in time and tune were the first points insisted on and secured. 'Expression' was afterwards attended to, and in a great measure attained. If in any thing they have failed it is owing to no fault of theirs, but to a prevailing insensibility to the claims this duty of praising God has upon our best efforts to render it not unworthy of the Being who must condescend even to listen to the anthems of heaven. Praise is graciously accepted, we are encouraged to believe—but only when it is 'comely.' We have been content to bring the lame and the sickly for offerings. We have seemed to think that it is not worth while, much less an obvious duty, for the people to qualify themselves for the only part that falls upon them in the worship of God. They may do this as well as they can, or not at all; if they so choose. This case is an exception to the general rule; 'no voice can be improved by cultivation—every body reads music by the light of nature, and forms an harmonious bass or tenor by the spontaneous suggestion of his untutored ear.' We should not tolerate the same marks of want of care and study in the ministrations of the pulpit. The heart and understanding we know are chiefly to be looked to,

for it is these alone that God regards. The harsh whooping that could be heard from a hut-full of converted Hottentots—if it proceeded from no spurious feeling, is of higher account than the most finished performances of the vain and self-respecting. But is it evidence of a right state of the heart, or indeed of the understanding, to leave imperfect what might be improved? Neglect in this matter, when it is not the result of ignorance, closely resembles presumption and profanity.

There is a point in the progress of such attempts as we are advocating, when the psalmody may possibly exhibit somewhat of a cold and artificial character. It may be expected to occur just before a sufficient number of people have qualified themselves to bear a part in the new and better mode of performing the duty, before the mass of the congregation is accustomed to the wide transition and familiar with the newly introduced melodies. But time will cure this—and there will be the less to cure, the more zealously the congregation co-operate in whatever methods of reform may be pursued. It may be thought by some, that we desire a degree of perfection in the singing of our congregations which is not attainable, nor if it were, desirable—that we wish to render it a musical performance which may gratify the ear and taste of the fastidious. The tenour of our observations ought to repel this charge. It is the perfection of psalmody which we would promote, not that which belongs to the concert-room. Could we, by one stroke of our pen, realize all we desire—instead of a smaller number of singers, there would be many more than at present. For almost every body might use his voice at some pitch or other with addition to the general effect, as well as profit to himself. It is not travelling out of our record, to refer to the great advantage which the rite would receive, were the announcement of the hymn and tune, and the recitation of the former which is customary amongst us, committed to those who would not shock us by a style of delivery either formal or flippant, irreverent or pompous. We could instance congregations that have been great gainers by relinquishing the services of those whose only qualifications are, perhaps, loudness of voice and a superficial knowledge of music, for the unpaid superintendence of men of education, taste, skill in music, and best of all for our purpose, piety. In most of our chapels one or two uniting these attributes might surely be found; are they ashamed to use them in such service?

It would contribute not a little to the future perfection of psalmody, were facilities afforded in our colleges for instruction in the science of music, and those principles of taste which have respect to it. This would secure at least one man of influence in each congregation, competent to repair the defects we at present deplore. We may repair, because it must be recollected, that it was not always as it is now; psalmody had a brighter era, and to that standard we desire to return.

The laudable and successful attempt which is being made in a suburban hamlet to introduce a knowledge of music and a love of its pleasures, into classes of society which we have hitherto been content to leave a prey to debasing appetites and sordid engagements, albeit ready enough to exasperate the evils by legislating against them, should it provoke imitation, will tell favorably on psalmody itself. In the instance we refer to, this forms a prominent part of their choral performances, which considering the short time since the experiment was begun, reflect the highest credit on the zeal and ability of the gentleman to whom the public is principally indebted, for practically bringing this means of civilization before its notice.

We refer our readers to the very able preface of the Psalmist for a summary of the sacred history of music, with a copious citation of authorities from which there is no appeal to justify its religious use; if that can be thought necessary. It also contains a succinct account of the rise and progress of psalmody. The scheme of the work is perspicuously declared, and reflects the highest credit on those who devised it. The principles which have guided the compilers in the choice of tunes are plain, and will approve themselves to every one who allows himself the pleasure of reading their preface. The result is a collection unrivalled in the number of unexceptionable tunes it contains, and in the beauty of their arrangements, in which the harmonies are rich and full, without being abstruse or intricate. This of itself is a very great improvement on the popular collections, which are notoriously poor and deficient in arrangement; no slight fault when it is recollected that chords of simultaneous sounds affect us precisely as sounds in succession do. Harmony is a power of expression, often equal and sometimes superior to melody. It gratifies more than the appetite of the ear. It can be made to excite the imagination and stir the heart.

The case of performers of ordinary skill has been consulted by every simplification consistent with musical propriety. The tenor and also clefts, which few are acquainted with, are discarded. A few of the arrangements, especially in the first part of the work, are in a style altogether too chromatic. The basses have more of the florid and instrumental character than should be found in compositions for popular use, and that on occasions when devotion and not display is regarded. But the great majority of the tunes are not open to this objection.