

and comfort to the sad and sorrowful; it cheers when the death-damps are gathering on the brow. The pious patriarch will teach it to his children's children, as they stand around his knees. If it be delightful to live in hearts we leave behind, the writer of the hymn has this honour in a preëminent degree. He ministers to those who shall be heirs of salvation. He accompanies the Christian pilgrim on his way, singing to him, with the voice of some guardian spirit, songs of faith and triumph and heaven. How those sweet hymns become endeared to us,—twined around our hearts and memories, as years roll on! That one is the hymn the sainted mother and sister sang so often in the gathering twilight, in the happy days of the past. That other is more hallowed still,—our loved, departed ones died with it upon their lips. As their last song on earth, it melted into the anthem of the skies. This one we sang, with streaming eyes and bursting heart, looking up to God for strength, on the morning when the little coffin was borne from our door, and we looked our last on the pale flower we were to see no more on earth. Here is the one we sang with the distant and dead, on the calm evening of a Communion Sabbath; and this was the special favourite with the family circle,—now, alas! how scattered! So, the tenderest memories and associations of a whole lifetime gather around our psalms and hymns. So do they link together the generations and the ages, joining our hands with those of God's great family who have crossed the flood, and with those who shall come after us. Truly our hymn-writers are among our noblest benefactors. They give us songs in the night and darkness, to charia away our sorrows, and disperse those raven doubts that perch themselves upon the heart—

"Till the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away."

Looking, then, at the mighty influence of hymns, the question naturally arises, have our Presbyterian Churches fully turned to account this agency, that might

become so potent for good? Do they wield with effect an instrumentality which may sway, so powerfully, the hearts of the people? We complain, at times, of our want of power over the masses. May it not in part arise from our neglecting, in great measure, to speak to them in sacred song? We have failed to avail ourselves of the common store of Christendom,—that great reservoir of spiritual song, fed by streams from all ages and all lands; and we have suffered and do suffer loss by our neglect. We have cut ourselves off from one of the chief sources of lively, devotional feeling, while addressing ourselves too exclusively to the intellect. Our gleanings from this great harvest have been scanty and partial in the extreme; and it is quite time that, as a Church, we laid claim to our rights, as members of the great brotherhood, to a full participation in the common store. It is a serious mistake to suppose that those homely things called hymns are merely superficial, transient, popular things, unworthy the attention of theologians. All the great leaders of religious movements, from Arius to Wesley, have been witness to the fact that hymns are more powerful in fixing religious dogmas and guiding religious feeling in the minds of the people than any other mode of teaching.

I now resume our brief survey of Christian hymnology at the point reached at the close of the last paper. It is deeply to be regretted that we are in possession of no hymns of the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles,—not even a fragment having been preserved amid the wrecks of time. Still a few of a very early date have reached us—the earliest dating from the third century. Of these primitive, Christian hymns it is touching and instructive to find that Christ is the grand theme. They are entirely free from all Mariolatry and all saint adoration. In them, Christ is fully set forth as the only-begotten of the Father—the Incarnate Word—the God-man. His mediatorial character was the joy of the early Churches; and this sacred theme inspired their first anthems. Doubtless, the manner of singing must have