

## A DUTY TO SING.

Not long since we worshipped in two congregations on the same Sabbath. In one nearly the whole congregation united in singing the psalms which were selected as appropriate to the sermon. The effect upon our feelings was almost electrical. We entered the pulpit feeling that to preach was a task which we were but little prepared to perform, and that it would be an up-hill business. By the time the second psalm had been completed, so exhilarating and elevating had been its effect upon us that that feeling had passed away, and preaching became a pleasure. The agreeable services of the morning led us to anticipate those of the evening with pleasure. We entered the house of God with a mind filled with the subject of discourse, and a secret longing to be permitted to impress our thoughts upon those who might assemble to hear. Psalms appropriate to the occasion were selected, the congregation was larger than the one of the morning, and every thing was calculated to inspire the spirit of preaching, but, when the singing commenced, it was confined to a few voices in a distant gallery. It may have been scientifically very correct, and calculated to tickle the well-trained ear, for aught we know, but to us it bore the semblance of a cold and heartless performance. We could see all over the congregation professed Christians, whom we knew, God had gifted with fine natural voices, sitting with their books open before them, their lips sealed, and they declining to take any part in the delightful service. The effect was chilling in the extreme. We dragged through the services, which were closed with a similar performance to those which preceded the sermon, and we retired to spend a restless night in thinking over the unsatisfactory scenes through which we had passed. It may be we are more the creature of feeling, and more susceptible of impressions from such sources than others, but we doubt that many of our ministerial brethren will very readily enter into our feelings, and understand what we have described. We have a profound admiration for the man who can preach a solemn and impressive discourse after the singing of two or three cold and heartless tunes, in which the mass of his hearers take no part. He must certainly possess in a high degree that which Cicero declared to be the secret of the true orator—"the power of self-excitement."

But what we intended when we started was essentially to suggest to those professed Christians, who sit with sealed lips when this part of Divine worship is performed, that it is a Christian duty to sing, and that they cannot neglect it without incurring guilt. It is not a thing that they can do by proxy, unless there is some physical impediment in the way of the discharge of the duty. They might as well think of hiring a set of men and women to do their praying for them as to hire them to do their singing. We enter not here into the question of the lawfulness or expediency of choirs or instrumental accompaniments. All admit, in theory at least, that the choir is merely to lead the congregation, and the instrument to be suitably an accompaniment of the voices of the people; but in practice, in too many instances, those congregations which have them, permit the choir to perform the whole service, and their voices accompany the instrument, whilst it is the main performance. Singing God's praises has been practised by his people in all ages. It was common both before the giving of the law and during the continuance of it under the Old Dispensation. It was practised by Christ and his Apostles, as we learn from the institution of the Sacred Supper, as recorded in Matt. xxvi. 30. The Apostle Paul enjoins it in his Epistle to the Colossians—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord." Again, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, he urges them to "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." Again, he says to the Corinthians—"I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also." This noble apostle would never have been satisfied to permit others to do his singing for him. It was too delightful a service, and exerted too refining and elevating an influence upon him, to permit that. He may have allowed them to lead but he would follow. One of the greatest of uninspired theologians, President Edwards, in his sermon on "Praise the chief employment of Heaven," concludes with the following pointed remarks:—"As it is the command of God that all should sing, so all should make a conscience of learning to sing, as it is a thing which cannot decently be performed without learning. Those, therefore, where there is no natural inability, who neglect to learn to sing, live in sin, as they neglect what is necessary in order to their attending one of the ordinances of God's worship." If it be a sin, then, to learn to sing, how much greater a sin it is to refuse to do it, after we have been taught how it is to be done. It is a wilful neglect of one of the means of grace which God Himself has appointed for the sanctification of His people. Our churches have greatly neglected this means of grace, and ministers and elders are very guilty in this matter. Whole generations of the Church have grown up in many places without one single pound being expended, or one hour devoted to teaching them how to sing God's praises, whilst hundreds have been devoted to teaching them to sing the light, and often foolish songs of the parlour and the gay assembly. And it is no uncommon occurrence to see Christian ladies and gentlemen, whose voices can be heard thrilling over the notes of some comic song or sickening love ditty, for whole squares around the place of the gathering of a social party, sitting on the ensuing Sabbath as mute in the house of God as if He had given them no tongues to speak His praise. Whether they will have a heart to join in the new song of redeeming love, which is sung around the Throne in the Upper Sanctuary, we know not, but of one thing we are certain, if they do, they must

change greatly from their present tastes and inclinations.—*Christian Treasury.*

## TATTLING.

If the peace of our church be preserved, the members must watch against and repress a Tattling disposition.

There are few circumstances which tend more to disturb the harmony and repose of our societies, than a proneness, in some of their members, to a gossiping, tattling disposition. There are persons so deeply infected with this Achanian passion to hear or tell some new thing, that their ears or lips are always open. With insatiable appetite they devour all the news they can by any means collect, and are never easy until it is disgorged again, to the insupportable annoyance and disgust of those around them. It is one of the mysteries of God's natural government, that such should gain a sort of adventitious consequence by the mischief they occasion, and be thus sheltered from scorn by being regarded with dread. The tattler is one of this description. I mean the individual who loves to talk of other men's matters—and especially of their faults, for it will be found, that by a singular perversity of disposition, those who love to talk about the circumstances of others, rarely ever select their exccrancies as matter of discourse, but almost always fix upon their failings, and thus, to borrow a simile of Solomon's, they resemble the fly, which neglects the healthful part of the frame, to pitch and luxuriate on the sore.

In the case of tattling, there are generally three parties to blame. There is first the gossip, then the person who is weak enough to listen to, and report the tales, and lastly, the individual who is the subject of the report, who suffers his mind to be irritated, instead of going in the spirit of meekness, to require an explanation from the original reporter.

Now let it be a rule with every church member, to avoid speaking of the circumstances, and especially of the faults of others. Let this rule have the sanction of the laws of Heaven, and the immutability of the Medes and Persians. Let every individual resolve within himself thus: "I will be slow to speak of others. I will neither originate a report by saying what I think, nor help to circulate a report by repeating what I hear." This is a most wise regulation, which would at once preserve our own peace and the peace of society. We should beware of saying any thing, which by the perverted ingenuity of a slanderous disposition, may become the basis of a tale to the disadvantage of another. It is not enough, as I have hinted, that we do not originate a report; but we ought not to circulate it. When it reaches us, there it should stop, and go no farther. We should give it to prudence to be buried in silence. We must never appear pleased with the tales of goossips and newsmongers, much less with the scandals of the backbiter, our enemy is their reward. If there were no listeners, there would be no reporters. In company, let us always discourage and repress such conversation. Talkers know where to find a market for their stuff, and like ponchers and smugglers, who never carry their contraband articles to the house of an exciseman, they never offer their reports to an individual who, they know, would reprove them in the name of Jesus.

Let us avoid and discourage the hollow, deceitful practice of indulging a tattling disposition under the cover of lamenting over the faults of our brethren.

There are cases in which a modest disclosure of the failings of others is necessary. Such, for example, as when a church is likely to be deceived in the character of an individual, whom it is about to admit to communion. In such instances, the person who is aware of the imposition that is likely to be practiced, should go directly to the pastor and make him acquainted with the fact; instead of which, some persons whisper their suspicions to any and to many, except the pastor. It is perfectly lawful, to prevent any brother from being betrayed into a ruinous confidence in pecuniary matters, by informing him of the character of the individual by whom he is about to be deceived. Silence, in such cases, would be an obvious injury.

"Be slow to speak," then, is a maxim which every Christian should always keep before his eyes. Silent people can do no harm; busy talkers are always dangerous.—*Church Member's Guide, by J. A. James.*

**PALM TREE.**—A tree remarkable for loftiness, straightness, and productivity, and hence made an emblem in Scripture of uprightness, fruitfulness and victory. (See Psalm xcv. 12.) Its fruit is the date, very sweet and nourishing, and a large portion of the inhabitants of Egypt, Arabia, and Persia, subsist almost entirely upon it. Camels are fond of the stone. This fruit is of the size of an olive. Palm branches were signals of joy and triumph. The leaves are six or eight feet long, and proportionably broad when spread out, and are used to cover houses, and make couches, baskets, bags, fences, hats, etc. From the fibres of the branches are made thread, ropes, rigging, etc. Indeed, the natives (says Gibbon) celebrate, either in prose and verse, three hundred and sixty uses to which the trunk, branches, leaves, juice, and fruit are applied. The palm tree attains maturity in thirty years from planting seed, and continues in full strength for seventy or eighty years, bearing annually three or four hundred pounds of dates. and finally dies at two hundred years old. From its sap palm wine is made, called by the natives Araky. It is a beverage which easily intoxicates, and is thought by Bishop Louth to be the "strong drink" mentioned in Isaiah v. 11, and xxiv. 9. From the species of palm tree called Landon, growing wild in various parts of the East, the common sago is procured.—*London Jewish Chronicle.*