

EDUCATION.

FOR THE TEMPERANCE ADVOCATE.

On the importance, or advantages of teaching Children and Youth generally, in all our Public and Private Schools, to sing Moral and Religious Music. By G. W. LUCAS.

Moral and Religious music should be taught in every public and private School. This would soon place our Christian psalmody beyond the reach of those influences, which now in many places render it so irregular in its character, and often a source of bitter contention and feeling between members of the same church. Christian reader, this should not be attributed to the nature and legitimate effects of music. Not only such deplorable evils as these may result from the various views, tastes and feelings which may be entertained by the different members of the same church, so long as they have not been trained to sing and think alike on this subject; but it should be plain to the good sense of every one, that no congregation which depends entirely on a few select singers for their church music, can have good and regular singing long at a time. Every setting sur changes the conditions and circumstances of men, and therefore, unless we are constantly fitting and adding new members to a choir, it will soon go down, and with it the singing. And what else should we expect, where none but adult singers are inserted in a limited set of tunes for public service? Soon, these disappear from the singers' seats, and with them, as I have already said, the music.

Now then, how shall these difficulties be remedied, and our church music become what it should be, not only as good at one time as another, out the personal property of every member in the congregation—the sweet and personal service of every worshipper, young or old? The answer is plain.

Let our children and youth generally be taught to sing as they are to read and write, and the result is obvious. Let this be followed up as a principle of education, and as a matter of course, people would as generally become good singers, as they are now good readers. In this state of things, our church music, both choir and congregational, would soon become full and delightful. Nor would this necessarily confine a congregation to a few old tunes; on the other hand, new tunes could be much more frequently and easily introduced than they now are when the singing is principally confined to the choir, or a small part of the congregation. The cultivated ear, having been trained to distinguish between musical sounds from youth, would readily catch the style and expression of any new tune.

Besides, meetings for the improvement of music would be better attended, especially by the middle aged and more advanced in life. Singing would then become as common in family worship as the reading of the Bible now is. And how delightful this would be to the feelings of every pious father! There would not then be any disagreement in a congregation, arising from a diversity of opinions in reference to the character and fitness of tunes, for the natural result of a general attention to the subject would be a unity of taste and feeling in the selection of tunes.

Such, then, are some of the advantages which sacred music would, in a very few years, derive from cultivating it among our children and youth generally—good and regular singing in all our churches—in the prayer meeting—at the family altar—uniformity of taste and harmony of feeling on the subject among the members of the same church and congregation, and good order and attention in all our meetings for musical improvement.

The cultivation of a suitable kind of vocal music in our schools generally, would produce great and important moral and physical effects.

That is the best system of education which recognizes human nature as it is, and appropriately adapts its various principles to the several periods in human life, especially that in which the faculties of the mind bud and blossom, in such a way as to develop and strengthen every principle of the man, both mental and physical.

At the meridian of life, man has become fixed in habits. Like the summer field, he now exhibits the rich fruits of early culture, or the noxious weeds of vernal neglect. With him the season of spring is past—the delicious blossoms of youth long since with-

ered, and he must remain what he is. Sensible, virtuous, and sympathetical, he lives a blessing to his family and the world, or vacant and stupid, a sad monument of moral and mental neglect.

Not so with the child. He is like the spring garden ready for the seed, and you may now fill it with all that is lovely and delightful to behold; for in accordance with the laws of nature, plant what you may, it will produce its kind. The mind of a child, may be filled with whatever you please, but like the spotless snow, when once stained, it can only be purified by resolving into its native element. Or like the sun-glass, it may become the focus of the wide spreading beams of intellectual light, and then again, like the convex mirror, reflect them for the happiness of all around.

Children naturally desire, and should have some kind of wholesome recreation. Until matured by time and occupied with settled attainments, their thoughts will pursue whatever comes in their way. Their thoughts are active, and will constantly seek objects of amusement. And let it not be forgotten by any parent, that the impressions which their minds receive from those objects of pleasure, are as deep and permanent as any other.

The love of variety and amusement is a predominant part of their nature, and if they cannot find them in objects of taste and innocency, they will in what is vile and criminal. Thus same natural propensity, which leads the favoured children of some to the enjoyment of refined and innocent means of amusement, as active and powerful among those who stroll amid scenes of profanity and wickedness for the same purpose. As the child goes out in pursuit of amusement, he should be presented with such attractions as would immediately engage his attention and direct his thoughts to moral and suitable objects.

Now, nothing can be better calculated for this purpose than moral and religious music. Pure and celestial, it refines their sensibilities, and inspires them with every thing that is good, noble and benevolent. Attractive and expressive of pure and moral sentiments, it wins in the most pleasing manner the attention, and impresses the mind with a deep and permanent reverence for religious and sacred things. Free from all causes of dispute, strife and envy, so common in other sources of amusement, it leaves the heart undisturbed by rancorous feelings and corroding revenge, and promotes a kind and friendly intercourse, important both to the happiness of our children, and the peace of society. As a most pleasing and innocent amusement then, an opportunity for learning a suitable kind of vocal music should be placed within the reach of every child and youth—in every school, whether private or public.

Parents should remember, also, that the exercise of the lungs in singing, is one of the best means of preserving and promoting the health of their children, especially those who are much confined at school and whose habits are sedentary and inactive. This subject has received the particular attention of the most learned men on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as the experiments of many skilful teachers of children, and they all agree in the fact that the exercise of singing strengthens the lungs, and preserves them from diseases of a pulmonary kind. But there is another and still more important reason for the cultivation of moral and religious music among children and youth. I mean its strong moral and religious influence. The fact that some who have cultivated sacred music from their earliest years are still immoral men, is no proof against its divine influence. Without it they may have been much worse. There are degrees in vice as well as in virtue.

If in manhood we carefully analyze all those little thoughts and propensities which seem to lie so far back in the recesses of the heart, as to be incapable of influencing our present sentiments and actions, we shall find them, not only the impressions of our earliest days, but much to our surprise, the most active principles in our characters, both moral and civil. In view of this interesting fact, we see the great importance of teaching our children to chant the sweet strains of Sacred Song when we consider their peculiar adaptation to the youthful mind and affections. In youth, the mind is open and susceptible, because it is free from most of those errors and influences which so frequently mislead our conduct and opinions in after life. This is the time to engage it in the pursuit of all that is noble and virtuous, and store it with moral and reli-