

THE POWER OF MUSIC.

BY THE REV. MR. WESLEY.

1. By the power of music, I mean its power to affect the hearers; to raise various passions in the human mind. Of this we have surprising accounts in ancient history. We are told the ancient Greek musicians in particular, were able to excite whatever passions they pleased; to inspire love or hate, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, courage, fury, or despair; yea, to raise these one after another, and to vary the passion, just according to the variation of the music.

2. But how is this to be accounted for? No such effects attend the modern music; although it is confessed on all hands, that our instruments excel theirs beyond all degrees of comparison. What was their Lyre, their instrument of seven or ten strings, compared to our violin? What were any of their pipes, to our hautboy or German flute? What, all of them put together, all that were in use two or three thousand years ago, to our organ? How is it then, that with this inconceivable advantage, the modern music has less power than the ancient?

3. Some have given a very short answer to this, cutting the knot which they could not untie. They have doubted, or affected to doubt the fact; perhaps have even denied it. But no sensible man will do this, unless he be utterly blinded by prejudice. For it would be denying the faith of all history; seeing no fact is better authenticated. None is delivered down to us by more unquestionable testimony; such as fully satisfies in all other cases. We have, therefore, no more reason to doubt of the power of Timotheus's music, than that of Alexander's arms; and we may deny his taking Persepolis, as well as his burning it through that sudden rage, which was excited in him by that musician. And the various effects which were successively wrought in his mind, (so beautifully described by Dryden, in his Ode on St. Cecilia's-day), are astonishing in-

stances of the power of a single harp, to transport, as it were, the mind out of itself.

4. Nay, we read of an instance, even in modern history, of the power of music not inferior to this. A musician being brought to the king of Denmark, and asked, whether he could excite any passion, answered in the affirmative, and was commanded to make the trial upon the king himself. Presently the monarch was all in tears; and upon the musician's changing his mood, he was quickly roused into such a fury, that snatching a sword from one his assistant's hands, (for they had purposely removed his own), he immediately killed him, and would have killed all in the room, had he not been forcibly withheld.

5. This alone removes all the incredibility of what is related concerning the ancient music. But why is it that modern music in general, has no such effect on the hearers? The grand reason seems to be no other than this: the whole nature and design of music is altered. The ancient composers studied *melody* alone; the due arrangement of single notes: and it was by melody alone, that they wrought such wonderful effects. And as this music was directly calculated to move the passions, so they *designed* it for this very end. But the modern composers study *harmony*, which in the present sense of the word is quite another thing, namely, a contrast of various notes, opposite to, and yet blended with each other, wherein they,

"Now high, now low, pursue the resurgent fugue."

Dr. Gregory says, this *harmony* has been known in the world little more than two hundred years. Be that as it may, ever since it was introduced, ever since *counterpoint* has been invented, as it has altered the grand design of music, so it has well-nigh destroyed its effects.