

fair friends will be induced to devote a few of their leisure hours to the study of the loveliest of terrestrial things. If they do so, I have no doubt but that they will find many pleasing specimens in all their rural walks; and if Botany is one of the employments of a future state, we may take delight then in examining the productions of other worlds, and in beholding the surpassing beauty of Him, who is called "the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley."

PHILANTHOS.

Woodstock, June 26, 1848.

OLD SONGS.

BY ELIZABETH YOCATT.

From Tait's Magazine.

In ancient times, the Muses were said to be only three, Mneme, or "Memory;" Methe, or "Meditation;" and Aoide, or "Song." According to the poet Aleman, they were the daughters of Uranus and Gæa, dwelling in Mount Helicon, but nevertheless children of Earth. It is of the last mentioned of these three gentle sisters that we are about to write, claiming her as one of the sweetest of our household deities to this day.

Music has been called "an artistic union of inarticulate sounds and rhythm, exciting agreeable sensations, and raising mental images and emotions directly or indirectly pleasing. As an adjunct, it is a beautiful illustration of language; combined with the sister art, it becomes a highly ornamental kind of eloquence." It is a tuneful link between the present and the past—a sweet and mysterious voice, whispering of by-gone days—and friends—and scenes—and bright, fairy hopes that may never come again. "Musical floods of tears!" to quote the words of one of its most enthusiastic votaries—"gushes of pure joyfulness! exquisite embodiments of fugitive thoughts!" A thing of dreams, and memories, and beauty! Melodious outpourings of genius, that slip into the heart, as dear old Christopher North says, just like light, no one knows how, filling its chambers sweetly and silently, and leaving it nothing more to desire for perfect contentment.

Madame De Staël advocates the infinite superiority of instrumental over vocal music, on account of the vagueness of the former leaving so much to the imagination; while Metastasio describes it as possessing that advantage over poetry, which a universal language has over a particular one. But this is a subject upon which we have no intention of entering, the present paper being devoted to the thoughts and reminiscences indissolubly connected with Old Song—and who has not some such?

We are told by Lucretius, that "the birds taught man to sing." "And did God teach the birds?" asked one who was too bright and pure for this world, and is now, we trust, among the angels in heaven. The expression of that childish face, with the clear earnest eyes, and thoughtful brow, is hunting us yet. "Did God teach the birds?" or did they burst out singing all at once, when they opened their eyes upon so beautiful a world? I do not think I should have required teaching, it seems so natural to sing when we are happy! Like that young child, many of our ancient philosophers believe song and speech to have been coeval.

Music among the Greeks is a comprehensive term, signifying poetry sung with some sort of accompaniment. According to tradition, Cadmus with his Phœnicians originally introduced music into Greece. But Plutarch, in his "Dialogue on Music," first makes Lycias a professor of the art, repeats the statement of Heraclides, that Amphion, the son of Jupiter and Antiope, taught the Greeks to compose and sing lyric poetry; then by a second interlocutor, Soterichus contradicts the first, assigning to Apollo the merit of having converted Greece into a musical nation—Apollo, the singer, as he is termed by Horace.

"By what is called Greek music, therefore," writes the able author of that article in Knight's Cyclopædia, "we understand the union of poetry and music, the former of the two exercising the greatest sway over the mind, because expressing noble sentiments—gracefully inculcating religion and morality—teaching

obedience to the laws—exciting generous feelings—and inspiring patriotism and courage. It is thus only that we can account for the effects said to be wrought by ancient music." And again, he repeats his belief that it is the blending of harmony and song, which undeniably operated with such amazing force on all classes of the people—music being but the ally of verse. According to Plato and Aristotle, the Greeks, too, had their old songs, some of which have descended to the present day, full of classical and traditional associations.

Homer is said to have sung his own epics. What is so delightful as to hear a poet sing his own compositions? The expression, the soul of the poetry, coming from his lips just as it welled up from the deep fountain of inspiration, the mysteries of which are so little understood by the uninitiated. What is so delightful as to set some favorite rhyme to a tune of our own, and sing it to weariness—if that were possible? It is pleasant enough for an author to find his works translated into a foreign language; but to hear his own songs unexpectedly, in a far land—ah! that is fame indeed!

Rousseau describes Song (*chanson*) "as a very brief, lyrical poem, founded commonly on agreeable subjects, to which a melody is added for the purpose of singing it on familiar occasions, either at table among friends, or to a beloved object; and even when alone, to dissipate the ennui of the rich, and to lighten the care and labors of the poor"—but their principal charm must ever rest in association. It is scarcely needed that they should possess any peculiar merit of their own, but will be quite sufficient if they serve to call up a faint remembrance of the last time we heard them; and of the dear ones who might have been with us then. If they bring back the past, even though it be in sorrow—the melody remaining when the voice that warbled it so sweetly is hushed in death!

"A well known tune
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear—
Remember'd now in sadness!"

"We would liken music," says L. E. L., "to Aladdin's lamp, worthless in itself—not so for the spirits which obey its call. We love it for the buried hopes, the garnered memories, the tender feelings it can summon with a touch."

"As children," writes a celebrated authoress, "and before the sister-band was broken and divided by death and change, we had, I well remember, a pleasant custom of singing in turns, either at our needle-work, or after we retired to rest. And I have many a time, when I happened to lie awake at night, heard my little sister still singing on in her sleep. The memory of my gladsome and innocent childhood comes back like a spell, whenever I hear those old songs!"

How truly has the Poet said—

"There is delight in singing, though none hear
Beside the singer!"

It is so natural to sing when one is happy. On a bright sunny day for instance—or as we sit alone—or go about our household tasks—ay, and even at our desk, when the mood is on us, the invisible Aoide, and the heart's music will have vent! How an old song, or sometimes only a few lines of one, heard long since, comes back all of a sudden, like a flash of lightning, haunting us for days and weeks, even in our thoughts and on our lips, breaking forth half-involuntarily into words—and, then, as strangely it fades away, and returns not again, for years: just as if its memory had gone to gladden some one else. How often, when sorrow has stricken us into silence, has a few notes of some old familiar song broken the spell, and compelled us irresistibly, as it were, to join in that well-loved melody, so that we have wept to find ourselves singing, and yet sang on until we forgot our weeping!

We can remember, years ago, going on a visit to one who, although personally unknown to us at the time, we had been accustomed to regard with no little love and reverence, and feeling, as the young are apt to feel in a strange house, and amongst strangers, until on opening the window the following morning, we chanced to hear our hostess singing in the garden beneath,