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A
DISCOURSE ON PSALMODY.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DELIVERED

By the REV. SAMUEL BLAIR,

IN THE

Presbyterian Church in Neshaminy;

AT A

PUBLIC CONCERT,

GIVEN

By Mr. SPICER, Master in Sacred Music.

UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCY OF

The Rev. Mr. ERWIN, Pastor of that Church.

Published by desire.

With an APPENDIX, containing the Addresses of Mr.
ERWIN, and Mr. SPICER, on the Occasion.

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M.DCC.LXXX.IX.

THE Editor begs leave to inform the Public, that several gentlemen of letters and merit, who were present on the occasion of this Discourse, were of opinion, that the publication of it would tend to enliven and diffuse the spirit of improvement in Psalmody. Under this view, the Author has consented, at their instance, to commit it to the press. If, upon experiment, it shall be found to answer their expectations, they will have the satisfaction of having so far contributed to the interests of virtue and religion.

He also thinks proper to add, that the improvements, made by those, who took a part in the performances of that day, are highly encouraging to all, who may desire to cultivate the same pleasing and profitable art. The performers, though under the tuition of the same master, were collected from that, and several neighbouring religious societies; they had been but three months, and that, in separate schools, under his instruction; and had not, before that time, met together for conjunct practice in the parts which they sang: Yet, under all these unfavourable circumstances, they acquitted themselves to the high approbation of the auditors.—On this head, he takes the liberty to subjoin the following extract of a letter, with which he has been favoured: It was written by a lady of judgment and taste in music, as well as of consideration on other accounts, who

who was pleased to countenance the design by her attendance :

————— “ I find by your last, that you have not seen the account, which I had given our friend, of the concert in Neshaminy. I assure you, it surpassed my most sanguine expectations. Had you been of our party, as proposed, I am persuaded, that, independently of the felicity you would have enjoyed on the road, and in “ the feast of reason, and the flow of soul ” at ————— the evening before, you would have been highly gratified, both with the Discourse, and the musical entertainment, which followed. For the latter, we had about two hundred and fifty singers ; who were arranged in the order of the art, on the front floor of the gallery. They were all, I may say, well dressed ; that is, in rural simplicity and elegance. Many of the girls were, really, very handsome. This circumstance, added to the sweetness and harmony of their voices, and the sweeter harmony and innocence of, what may be called, the toute ensemble of their appearance, must have inspired you with a very charming sentiment. They all, indeed, seemed to be well taught and practised in the tunes, and different forms of music, which they sang ; and many of their voices were remarkably fine. The several parts of counter, treble, tenor, and bass were so judiciously adjusted and proportioned, and the time was

was so accurately observed, that not a jar, or any kind of insipidity, or dissonance, offended the ear. A very pleasing order, decency, and, indeed, solemnity, was maintained throughout the performance. One blunder, however, I know not from what cause, was committed. But, they recovered it, at the instance of their monitor, with so much address, that, in the event, it did them not a little honour. I was not sensible of its having produced the least confusion. The auditors, as I was informed, consisted of between eleven and twelve hundred persons. They were apparently attentive to the preacher, and delighted with the music. For myself, I can say with truth, I was never more pleased with any public entertainment than with the concert in Neshaminy. To you, this relation may seem strange, and, perhaps, exaggerated ; but strange as it may seem, it is true ; and it is true, without the least exaggeration. You are to remember, that the little knowledge you had of those people, was prior to the civil revolution ; and to the many liberal improvements in religious, as well as civil society, which have been made since that time.—It was likewise long before they had met with a Spicer to instruct and polish them in the arts of musical devotion.”

COL. iii. 16. *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 to the Lord.*

THE institutions of religion, and the documents of sound philosophy, are ever consistent with each other. They are grounded indeed in the same original principles. And the farther we trace them into these sources, the more clearly we discern their reason and propriety; their foundation in nature, and subserviency to virtue and felicity. This observation is most evidently applicable to the subject, presented to our view, in the passage before us. The christian professor hath here an apostolic direction to cultivate divine knowledge and sentiment by the use of sacred and well adapted song: To sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, that, by means of the instruction and admonition they thus convey, the word of Christ may dwell in him richly in all wisdom.

We propose briefly to enquire into the principles, in which this direction is founded; and, then into the tendency which a due compliance with this direction might have to produce the effects ascribed to it by the apostle. The result may
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be answerable to the design of our discourse, and the solemnities of the day.

When the beneficent Creator of the world had accomplished his design in the formation of man, he is represented as taking a general survey of his works, and pronouncing them all very good. Each part was finished with such skill and exactness, and so adjusted in respect of the whole, as to answer at once its general use and particular destination; and the whole was so completed, in respect of its parts, and of its ultimate end, as to compose one entire and perfect system; in its various order and process corresponding with the intentions of infinite wisdom and goodness. Man, in particular, God's chief workmanship; and in reference to whom all other things were made, was so framed, by the composition of two natures, as that, while in the one, he stood connected with this lower material creation, in the other, he held communion with a higher order of moral and intelligent existence. And so admirably were these seemingly opposite natures united, and such was the constituted dependence of the one upon the other, that the proper functions of either were requisite alike to the welfare of both. And both, thus united, and thus dependent, were again united with, and dependent on, the order and influence of the system around, and the system above them. From hence resulteth

resulteth the correspondence, so obvious in a variety of particulars, between our own frame, and the constitution of things without us. The notices, for instance, of material objects are conveyed to our minds through the intervention of our bodily senses. Their impressions through these mediums, are different, according to the different properties and affections of the external object. And each impression, either layeth a foundation for, or some how contributeth to, an answerable moral affection in the intelligent nature.

To speak more particularly to the present purpose: We are all very sensible of the communication of external sound through the organs of hearing. And not only of its different tones, as the high and the low, the clear, the soft, the shrill, and the harsh; but likewise of certain more inward effects, which we usually designate by the epithets, sweet, or soothing, melting, or elevating, jarring, or disgusting. Of these effects we are still more sensible, where the sound proceedeth from simple melody to harmony. And more sensible still, where the harmony is marked with an unity in the design and execution: that is; where the whole combination, how various soever, carries with it such an uniform complexion of sound, as conduceth to some one principal, and characteristic effect. In this case, the powers of sensibility,

sensibility, co-operating with the forces of the varied sound at one capital point, the effect at that point, will be as the united action of the whole. It is, therefore, that in this, the highest felicity of the composer in music consisteth; I mean, in associating in one tune, anthem, or other performance, such a diversity of notes of uniform quality, as that the whole, in its proper expression, shall constitute one distinct piece of constructed harmony; presenting, amidst all its varieties, one continued peculiar and congenial form, and contributing to one principal corresponding impression. If, for instance, the harmony designed should be of the grave or mournful, of the gay, or the tender, or the bold complexion, the work will be composed of tones, various indeed in the scale of progressive sound, yet, withal, of a similar character, answerable to the one distinct point in design, and co-operating into the one distinct effect more especially intended.

On the whole, we find in our nature a principle, by which we have become susceptible of feelings corresponding with the forms of sound transmitted through the organs of hearing. But, were this all; were we liable to impressions only of this kind, and terminating here, music would be, comparatively, of little avail even to our present well-being. At least, its effects would be indifferent

as to morals and religion; those all-important interests, which involve the chief ends of our future and interminable, as well as present and temporary existence: It would seem to be an object scarce worthy of the skill and attention of the Creator, if its power extended not beyond the production of certain sensations entirely separate, in point of influence, from our proper sentiments and conduct as moral intelligences. But, hitherto, we have only step'd, as it were, on nature's threshold. Let us proceed; and let us survey a little, her yet more inward works. They are alike exposed to observation and experience.

We are not only so constituted as to receive the afore-mentioned impressions of harmony; but it hath also pleased our Maker to establish an intimate connection between sounds, thus impressed, and the sentiments of the heart. Upon an accurate examination of our own feelings, we may discern an admirable similarity between those effects of mere sound, and those, of which we are sensible on occasion of emotions of the heart, originating in the conception of affecting objects. The sensations produced by the tender, plaintive, and melting strains, seem, as mere feelings, to be of the same kind with those, which we perceive in the affections of sympathy, sorrow, and what we call a pleasing melancholy. Those produced by the more
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lively and elevating airs, appear to be of a like species with those effected by the sentiments of joy or hope, or other exhilarating passion. And those, which proceed from the solemn and the grave, indicate a nature, similar to the impressions of veneration and awe. Now, in this similarity it is, that the foundation is laid in our nature for the moral operation of external harmony. External harmony prepares the mind, by this means, for the admission of moral objects, and for due attention to them, when admitted. For, it forms us into the same kind of inward frame, and places us, I may say, in that same kind of posture, into which we should have been brought by the moral affection itself, had it previously arisen. It first removes the impediment, which, in a different or contrary posture, might have operated against the admission; and then, by a direct influence, disposeth the mind to advert to such objects, as are most consonant with the present impression. It presenteth them to the view, nay, in some cases, even obtrudeth them in their most affecting attitudes and lights. The consequence is, that, that feeling, which, in its first appearance, was merely the result of the musical impulses, hath now become a real, effective, and profitable sentiment. So operative is this principle, that there are not wanting instances, where mere sounds, properly associated

sociated and harmonized, without the accompaniment of any other language, have affected the human powers, and prompted them to action, as successfully as the most pointed forces of reason and discourse.

From hence arose among the ancients many extraordinary fabulous traditions. Orpheus, the founder of civilized society in Greece, is said to have tamed, by the power of sound, the most ferocious wild beasts; and to have charmed the very rocks and forests, so that they followed his movements, and danced in harmonious order in his train. And Amphion is said to have built the city of Thebes, by the enchantments of his lyre; the inspiration of which was so powerful, as to animate the stones themselves, and prompt them to mount, as in voluntary motion, into regularly constructed edifices and walls. These traditions, how ludicrous soever as historical anecdotes, are not without foundation in nature and fact. They are to be considered, as figurative records of the influence of well-modulated sounds on the minds of men, even in their more barbarous and uncivilized state. Under this view, they serve to corroborate the observations which we have made. Orpheus, by the charms of associated melody, so softened the tempers of his rude uninformed countrymen, that they became amenable at once to the influence

influence of reason and sentiment. By these they were induced to the order and manners of civilized life. And Amphion, by the music of his lyre, prompted the Thebans to unusual alacrity and exertion in building a city for their common residence and defence.

Nevertheless, it must be observed, that the forms of harmony, even when of the same complexion, have not always the same kind, or degree, of moral effect. The moral effect in both respects often dependeth much on the previous disposition or character of the heart. The same modulations of sound, which will excite in one the emotions of pure and temperate love, will kindle in another the ardors of unlawful desire, and those which will soothe or animate to day, will scarcely attract the attention to-morrow. Were human souls, as when first they drop'd all pure and celestial, from the hands of their Creator, unsullied by vicious passion, and exempt from every corrupt bias, they would, no doubt, at every touch of harmony, be all alive to heavenly sentiment. Every varied air would insinuate some divine pathetic thought; and in turn, enliven, exalt, and meliorate the frame. In this case, our world would present a lively portrait, though in miniature, of those blissful regions, which are ever moved and charmed by the song and melody of angels. But, such is human nature

nature, in its present degenerate state, as, in a very great measure, to preclude these agreeable appearances. The aid of verbal instruction hath become, in general, requisite to render the impulses of music effectual; or rather, to give their impressions, when made, a proper and successful moral direction.

On this observation we ground the propriety and expediency of blending the vibrations of sound with the expressions of sense; and of so adapting the sound to the sense expressed, as that both shall conspire to the production of the same good moral effect. Where this coalition doth not take place, the mind, under the simple inspiration of the music, is often, in the first instance, in a critical situation; prompt, though yet undecided, to embrace, either a vicious, or a virtuous sentiment. In the crisis, the corrupt principle may take the start, and prevail; and, that prevailing, the otherwise salutary impulses will have been converted into baneful incentives to impurity and disorder. But, in the other case, the mind is seasonably pre-occupied: Virtuous notices are interwoven, and insinuate themselves, with the tones of the melody itself; and the impression, thus informed, appears at once with the features of a virtuous emotion. Virtuous emotions, thus produced, are, at times, in no small degree, practical and efficient. The knowledge

knowledge of the mind, and the passion of the frame, entering into, and reciprocally acting and re-acting upon each other, exalt the soul into an unusual, yet enlightened and generous, extasy, and propel it to deeds of virtue and piety beyond the ordinary reach of principle devoid of this aid.

What curses, my friends, may not rest on the head of him, who first prostituted the charms of music to the foul embraces of vice! And who, in profanation of her sacred appointments, presumed to dress with her blandishments the language of luscious impurity! The Author of our being endowed her with all her graces and powers, that she might serve as an useful and elegant handmaid to virtue and devotion. He is guilty of the worst of sacrilege, who hath wrested her from her hallowed service, and transferred her potent fascinations to the song of ribaldry, profaneness and lust.—But, peace, and unfading honors crown the memory of those, who, in the cause of moral order and heaven, have either adapted divine materials, in the language and measures of the muse, to compositions of harmony already prepared; or who have employed their talents in such compositions, adapted to the vein and expression of approved productions of whatever denomination.

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This leads me to consider, as promised, how the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs conduceth to the effects ascribed to it in the text: that is, how it serveth as a means, by which the word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom. But here it will be needful to premise.

In the first place: That, by psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, we are to understand any sacred poetical compositions: either those, which are usually called the Psalms of David, in versions suited to the state of Christian information and worship; or hymns and songs paraphrastic of, or grounded on, some passage of holy revelation; or, at least, conformable in their general sense and spirit, to that revelation. It is evident, that, in the primitive age of Christianity, the church did enjoy this extensive privilege; and that, they were furnished, for the purpose, with materials of these several denominations by the inspiration of that same Spirit, which assisted the preachers of the word. To the like privilege, we humbly conceive, that, the church is yet entitled. St. Paul, it is true, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, remonstrates against the disorderly use of it. But, neither its abuse in that instance, nor the cessation of the miraculous influence, by which it was favoured, is of any weight against our claim; I

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mean, provided we continue to use it with decency and in order. The argument, thus applied, would involve an inference much too extensive. It would plead, as any intelligent and candid reader of the passage may see, with equal force and propriety against doctrine, and the interpretation of an unknown tongue. Besides, as it was with them, so with us, the received revelation is both the subject, and acknowledged standard of this species of psalmody; and whatever, in preaching or in song, accordeth not with that standard, is effectually repudiated in the public opinion.

And in the second place: That, by the dwelling of the word of Christ in us richly in all wisdom, we are not to understand barely the acquisition, or retention, of what, for the sake of distinction, is called, speculative knowledge in the doctrines, and precepts of Christianity. The language of the apostle seems to imply, that the Colossians had already acquired, at least, a competent share of such knowledge. Such knowledge, though requisite, yet, standing alone in the mind, is jejune and unprofitable. It may be compared to insipid impoverished liquors, devoid of that spirit and poignancy, which is needful to the pleasure of the taste, or the exhilaration of the frame; or to a skeleton of the human body, without flesh or fluid, nerves or animation; and totally destitute of beauty and grace,

grace, in colour, form, or movement. It is only when our knowledge is informed with answerable affection of the heart, that the word of Christ dwelleth richly in us. The more deeply it is tinged with this spirit of life, the richer, and more effective it hath become. It hath taken root in a richer soil; it hath imbibed more copious and nutritious aliment; its ostensible branches are more vigorous and graceful; and its fruit more abundant and salutary. Thus informed, moreover, it dwelleth in us in proportionable wisdom. It is then only, that, in the sense of piety and scripture, it becometh true wisdom. The subjects of morality and religion are not objects of mere intelligence. Divine beauty, with utility and dignity combined, are their common and essential properties. In a word, they are objects of taste as well as speculation; and, like all other objects of that kind, cannot be truly known, while they are not relished and felt. The real perception of a beautiful object necessarily implies a complacency in it. And true wisdom consisteth in the love of goodness, and aversion from the contrary, founded in a perception of the beauty of the one, and deformity of the other.

Having premised thus much, a few words will suffice to shew, how the singing of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs contributeth to the effect

fect proposed. The materials of these compositions have an immediate relation to moral and religious objects: They exhibit those objects, not barely as they stand in the eye of speculation, but in their most interesting attitudes, and in their most attractive and commanding attire. They are there presented in the outward letter; in some measure, as they live and move in the inward sentiments or knowledge of the heart. To the heart and the understanding they are, at once, addressed; and sometimes in forms so insinuating, and, withal, so animated and glowing, as, on the first attention, to create in the mind a heavenly sweetness and ardor, and rekindle the spirit of duty and devotion. But, when associated with the powers of well-modulated sound, adapted to the features of piety and pathos, which they bear, it is then that the effect is exalted into its highest character and force. That man, my friends, must be possessed of a nature uncouth and insensible indeed, who, in this case, can remain unmoved; or whose heart is not touched at least with some heavenly sentiment. It is hard to suppose, that the impulses of harmony, in concert with those of the word, should not, where moral obduracy hath not become inveterate, stamp an impression, marked at once with the perceptions and feelings of piety. Nay, to such a degree have these impressions sometimes arisen

risen, as to issue in a kind of celestial rapture. In consequence, the word hath gained a deeper hold of the heart, and assumed a more uniform sway in the character and practice.

Such is the expediency, and such the importance, of a due compliance with the duty prescribed by the apostle. If, my Christian hearers, you would become rich in Christian knowledge and wisdom; if you would improve in faith and devotion; in charity, meekness, and hope; in patience and resignation; in fortitude and self-denial; or in any other virtue of your holy profession; you may meet with them in such compositions most effectingly and instructively explained and enforced; and, by uniting the melody of the voice with the charms of the sacred song, your hearts, with the blessing of heaven, may be seasonably informed, and furnished, and prompted to your wish.

Under these views, it appears, that the apostle hath, with good reason, represented the means prescribed, as means of instruction and admonition: *teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs*. The materials of these productions, being, as hath been observed, by the aids of music brought down, as it were, from the understanding and memory into the heart, and there becoming objects of real knowledge, in sensible and operative possession, do now appear

appear to us, in some adequate measure, as they are in themselves. They appear all-interesting and desirable, as well as evident and real. They appear, indeed, as matters of recent, as well as high information; in nature and form quite different from what they were before, whilst they occupied only the comparatively fruitless regions of intelligence. In like manner, when the truths and precepts of Christianity are thus addressed, we are affectingly admonished of the spirit and duties, which they import. We are excited to to penitent reflection on our past misconduct; and animated to fresh resolution and ardor in the courses of wisdom.

But, that these ends may be more effectually accomplished, it behoveth us to be mindful, that, the means should be accompanied and seasoned *with grace in the heart to the Lord*. In this particular I have already, in part, anticipated myself. It is, when the moral sense within, which, as a fruit and emotion of grace, hath respect to the Lord; answereth to the harmonious addresses of art and nature without, that the means are rendered most certainly and sensibly successful. To this point, therefore, our aims should, on all occasions, be directed. Otherwise, we shall have profited but little, how much soever we have been charmed with the voice or the skill of the performer. I

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am willing, however, to obviate a difficulty, which may, possibly, press on the minds of some, who consider themselves as yet devoid of that principle; and who therefore are inclined to suppose that they are not included in the apostolic prescription. Grace, my friends, or the sentiment of goodness in degenerate man, it is true, is most frequently intended to designate a governing and permanent habit. Yet where, as in many, it doth not thus exist, it may, nevertheless, exist in some form or other. Every good thought, every good disposition of the heart, though through the influence of generally predominant evil, it be incomplete in degree, and precarious in operation, is, notwithstanding, the gift of that *free favour*, which bringeth salvation, and hath appeared unto all men. By means of the word and institutions of religion, these common good principles may at length be improved and exalted, into a state of spirituality and permanent power. Sacred music, accompanied with the word, in the dress of sentiment and song, is one of those institutions. This institution ought, therefore, by no means, to be neglected by any, who either possess a voice to perform themselves, or an ear to admit, or heart to be impressed by, the music of others. Whatever be the good emotions excited, and however more or less sensible their degree, still, they are the emotions of grace, for which

which you are indebted to the free mediation of the Saviour of men.—Who can tell, when, in the course of this instrumental attention, that grace shall involve in its influence the whole system of your moral affections: or, in other words, when it shall issue in a characteristic and abiding principle of heavenly life! a principle, which, like some fair and generous production, shall grow and thrive beneath the smiles and culture of heaven, till competently improved, and seasonably transferred, it spring afresh, and flourish immarcescible in the climes of paradise above.

But, my friends, though the subject be pleasing, we must not be tedious. We have endeavoured to evolve some of the principles, and to explain the expediency of the apostle's direction. A proper compliance is incumbent on us, as we would improve in Christian knowledge and goodness. It is, however, with much satisfaction, that I mention the respect, which hath been paid to it of late in this place; and, especially, the advances, which have been made by so many in the arts of sacred music. Your attentions, we doubt not, will be amply rewarded. We rejoice, also, in the like improvements, which have elsewhere been made. Many Christian families, in consequence, have become vocal with the praises of the Deity, and harmonized in the interests of piety and heaven.

ven. Public worship hath assumed, comparatively, a celestial grace; and the temples of religion, instead of drolling out the tones of ill-measured dullness, or jarring with harsh discord, as before, now resound with vibrations of well-ordered, and commanding melody*.

It were, nevertheless, devoutly to be wished, that our sense of obligation, as Christians, in this

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* I cannot omit mentioning, in this place, the obligations of society to Mr. *Adgate*, for his assiduity and amiable conduct in promoting these improvements, particularly in the city of Philadelphia. The man, who hath signalized himself by such successful exertions; and who, from the benevolence of his heart, hath made so many sacrifices, in a design of so much utility to the morals of the people, ought, doubtless, to be held in great estimation, both as a citizen and as a Christian. It is much to be desired, that his important services may continue to be encouraged by the wise and the good of all denominations.

I will only add what hath been suggested by others; that it would contribute not a little to the benefit of religion, as well as to the satisfaction of many Christian worshippers, if proper choruses were instituted in the several churches; consisting of a competent number of the best performers in each; and stationed, either, in the front of the galleries, or in pews, appropriated to that use. In this case, the whole congregation, may unite, and follow with ease, in the best execution. At the same time, the predominant melody and address of the chorus will cover, or rectify, any mistakes, or other defects, which may occur in the general performance.

line did yet more practically and generally prevail; that we were yet more zealously and religiously affected in the view of the high benefits, which result from it; and that the votaries of psalmody were yet more numerous, both in our assemblies of worship, and schools of musical instruction. If, my fellow Christians, to exalt in our voices, as well as in our hearts, the honors of our God and Redeemer; if to charm ourselves or others, by this means, into virtuous and heavenly sentiment, be really a duty, as we must allow, we must also allow, that it ought, not barely to be performed, but performed in that way, in which it shall be most likely, with the blessing of heaven, to produce the good effects proposed. If performed in irregular, insipid, or dissonant tones, it will, at least, as to the hearer, either conduce to no good end at all, or its effect will be worse than that of total omission. This consideration alone, sufficiently evinceth, that it is our bounden duty at least, to aim at the most perfect execution; and, at the same time, to make decent sacrifices of time and expence in laying such a foundation of knowledge in the art, as shall enable us both to please and profit on every proper occasion.

Let it, moreover, be observed, that this duty, any more than other ordinary means of virtue
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and religion, ought not to be confined to the assemblies of the church. It is proper alike to more private occasional associations; and even to the closet itself. By the aids of this art, united with a tolerable voice, we may, at any time, blend the pleasures of high moral and musical taste, with other more customary amusements of society and friendship. By the aids of this art, we may cheer the most lonely shades of retirement; we may smooth the wrinkled brow of despondency and care; and shed light and joy through the awful recesses of the dungeon, or the night.

I would also beg leave recommend it, as an useful and elegant branch of Christian education. To the youth of both sexes it is alike ornamental and expedient. In the earlier periods of life the voice is generally most flexible and melodious; the taste for harmony and song is generally most poignant and prompt; and the pliant frame most easily susceptible of their various impressions. The liquid, flowing, and dulcet notes of the youthful warblers, marked by the distinctions of age, and of sex, as well as the departments in the chorus they assume, cannot fail to add a very sensible charm to the solemnities of public devotion. Their occasional interviews, moreover, instead of being dissipated in frivolous frolic and chit-chat,

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or poisoned with frothy ebullitions of wit and impurity, may be seasoned with such innocent and instructive amusement, as, alone, shall captivate the heart, prompt it to moral reflection, and charm it into habits of sweetness and wisdom.

On this account we conceive it to be highly inexpedient to limit the youth to such compositions, as are used on the more solemn occasions of worship. Their liberty here should be bounded only by the frivolous, the indecent, and profane. Whatever, in its spirit and expression, serveth to convey the sentiments of innocent nature, or excite to the true, the honourable, the pure, the lovely, or whatever is of good report, in character and conduct, should be freely conceded to their social or retired attentions. The good effects, in their higher and most desirable degrees, it is granted, do not always, at the time, appear. But though usually slow in their progression, they are often sure in their event. We must leave it to more full grown life to exhibit the fruits, in the most amiable and ripened forms of wisdom and humanity.

Nor from the benefits of this hallowed amusement would we exclude even the years of earlier immaturity and childhood. At this period, the features of nature, of which we speak, are as distinctly marked, as in youth or more advanced

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age. The infant, as yet in the arms of the parent, the lisping pratler which hangs upon the knee, and the playful school-boy and girl, are alike amenable to the powers of modulated sound. And, as all good education ought to commence, and proceed, with a principal view to the harmony of the mind, the parent, who hath made improvements in this line, enjoyeth, among others, an eminent advantage. By the fascinations of music, seasonably addressed, she may beguile their temporary sorrows and pains; she may calm their agitated spirits; and, eventually lodge them in the embraces of sleep, or restore them to wonted good humor. In this instance, I cannot help observing, that, the society of Moravians have discovered a singular attention to the operations of nature in the infant state. They seem to consider it as a point of religion, not only to entertain them in nurseries with the soft and blandishing strains of the voice, but to carry them daily into their houses of worship, that, there, their little tender frames may be harmonized into sweetness and peace, by the melody of the voice and instrument united.

Permit me likewise, in the last place, to recommend it to all, as preparatory, at least in respect of its moral effects, to a superior state of felicity and rectitude. It is appointed to serve as one branch

branch of that common education, by which we are trained, in this school of probationary exercise, for a nobler order of life and service. The employments and fruitions of that state are frequently described in holy revelation by the charming and familiar images of music and song. Passages to this purpose are so easily recollected, that it would be altogether needless to quote them. We cannot, indeed, confidently assert, that the audible harmony of sound will constitute a part of the celestial entertainment; much less, that it will assume those modifications, in which it is here practised and taught. But the harmony of the moral affections and powers, of which the audible is, at best but a faint expression or sign, doth there, we are well assured, prevail in its most divine and finished taste. Nevertheless, as we shall there, according to our faith, be re-united to these bodily vehicles, in superior refinement and spirituality, and, at the same time, to some general answerable order of nature: so, it doth not seem unreasonable to presume, that we shall be capable of unspeakably more expressive and refined execution, than the present condition of our organs, or other powers, will admit. A principal end, as you have heard, of external harmony is, to present to our notice, in the most affecting and agreeable forms, the inward moral harmony

ny of the heart; and this, not merely for the sake of the pleasing sensations which it affords, but to create, improve and confirm, those excellent and orderly sentiments, which it expresseth, both in ourselves and in others. Now, this moral harmony, in its perfection, is the sum of happiness and rectitude in heaven. Is it not, then, hard to conceive, that, there, where it shall have reached its most finished graces and forms, it shall remain devoid of that outward sensible expression, by which, even here, in its ruder state, our powers are so delightfully and profitably charmed! Under this view, let it be particularly observed; that, the more skillfully we have, here, adjusted its probationary key; the purer and the more melodious its notes; the more perfect its unisons and chords; and the more fully it involveth our various principles of sensibility and intelligence, still, the more it resembleth, and the more it is qualified to join the music of the heavenly spheres.

May this, my friends, be the high and happy conclusion of all our attentions and improvements on earth. From communion in piety and praise below, may we ascend to the choirs of saints and angels above; and there prolong a seraphic existence in the visions of God, and the song of Moses and the Lamb for ever.

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In this exalted and ravishing hope, we devoutly ascribe to the King eternal, immortal, and invisible; the only wise God; the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all glory, and blessing, thanksgiving, and praise, world without end. Amen.

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*An ADDRESS delivered by the Rev.
Mr. IRWIN.*

YOUR minds, my hearers, long employed, and perhaps fatigued even with their own pleasures, must now call for relaxation.—I shall therefore in a few words execute the part allotted to me, which is to conclude with a short address.

The *Audience* I am to thank for their attendance, and for the decent and regular attention they have given to the business of the day. I hope, you consider it, not only as a pleasure, but as a duty, to countenance, by your presence and smiles of approbation, these youth in their attempts to acquire the divine art of sacred music—of their proficiency in which they have now given you a specimen, and which, in its nature and tendency, is so useful, so pleasing, and so ornamental.

The *Performers* I am to thank for the pleasure they have given—I had almost said *to us all*. 'Tis well—tis nobly done, for the time. If six months application has produced this much, what may we not expect in time to come? Go on and prosper, my young friends. The best wishes of all the wise and good attend you—at least, all the enlightened and impartial friends of our Zion are interested in your success. Cultivate, then, divine music. It

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will

will furnish you with useful and elegant employment, at an age when you must be active—It will smoothe the rugged passions, sweeten the temper, and harmonize the soul.

“ Music has charms to soothe the savage breast ;
 “ To soften rocks, and bend the knotted oaks.”

And while you study music as a human art, remember it has its chief use in the worship of Almighty God—Endeavour therefore to tune your hearts with your voices—so will you make melody to God and man.

In fine, prompted by my own feelings, and the desires of a number present, I would address a few words to *You, Sir*, who have taught these youth to “ lisp in numbers,” and tuned their voices to the songs of Zion. Your skilful, your successful endeavours for their improvement, to which they have this day born ample testimony, merit our warmest acknowledgments. In my own name—in the name of all who have been under your instruction—nay, in the name of the *church of Christ* in these parts, which I think is your debtor, I return you thanks.—May you find your best reward in the testimony of a good conscience: and may sacred song—your business—your pleasure on earth; be your eternal and delightful employment in heaven!

Mr.

Mr. SPICER'S Address.

IT has afforded me not a little satisfaction to find, that this concert has attracted the attention of so numerous and respectable an audience. As I propose shortly to return to the place of my nativity, it is probable, that the present will be the last opportunity, in which I shall have the pleasure of meeting this assembly on a similar occasion. It is my most ardent wish, that what hath been so pertinently and convincingly said on the subject of psalmody, may reconcile every hearer to the propriety, expediency, and importance of its introduction into the public worship, in those forms of improvement, which we have been endeavouring to cultivate and advance.—But, what I have chiefly, at present, in view, is to address myself in a few words to these, my pupils in that branch of instruction.

My young friends, I feel myself highly gratified by the honour you have done me, as well as yourselves, in the part, which you have born in the performances of the day. But, the time is now come, when we must separate from each other.—It is a circumstance, which naturally leads to recollection.—In that recollection, however, I am happy, and proud to mention, in this public manner, that, from the commencement of our connection,

nection, the utmost good order, harmony, and peace have prevailed among us. Of this truth, we ourselves are not the only vouchers. There are here present a number, who, as occasional attendants at our meetings, can unite in witnessing the same. Thus much for the past. As for the future, my principal concern, as an instructor in psalmody, is, for your persevering improvement, and even perfection, if possible, in that heavenly art. The progress, which you have made, as you well know, is the fruit of attention and reiterated practice. Be assured, that, by remissness in either, you will not only cease from farther improvements, but must gradually resign even those to which you have already attained. In short, the whole depends in future, with the smiles of heaven, on your own resolution and industry; and particularly on the taste you shall cultivate for devout and virtuous sentiment.

My best wishes attend you, my dear pupils, in this, and in every other interesting and lawful pursuit. Should we never meet again for this purpose on earth, I shall, at least, be happy in the prospect, that, in due time, we may assemble in higher condition, with the choirs of the heavenly world, and unite in the anthems of eternal praise.

F I N I S.