

**THOUGHTS ON SINGING
WITH HINTS ON THE
ELEMENTS OF EFFECT AND
THE CULTIVATION OF TASTE**

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Thoughts on singing with hints on the elements of effect and the cultivation of taste by John
Gothard

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JOHN GOTHARD

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THOUGHTS ON SINGING, &c.

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THOUGHTS ON SINGING;

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HINTS

ON THE ELEMENTS OF EFFECT AND THE
CULTIVATION OF TASTE.

BY JOHN GOTHARD.

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED TO
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INTRODUCTION.

IF there be truth in the assertion, that "nothing was made in vain," it will not be deemed improper to rank Music among the creations of utility. The response which it meets with, in almost every member of the human family, points at once to its relation and adaptation to man.

The avidity which is every where manifested to listen to Music; the eagerness and delight exhibited in the faces of the multitudes that follow even a common country band; the prevalence of this taste in every part of the known world, shew unerringly that the relish for it is deeply implanted in human nature.

Admitting, then, the truth of these views, we are naturally led to the conclusion that Music was created for benign purposes. Let us enquire, for a moment, in what singing has been found useful. Experience has long since shewn that its effects

on health are most beneficial. When not immoderately pursued, it strengthens the lungs, and renders them less susceptible of injury from atmospheric changes and other influences. To find a person who regularly sings afflicted with asthma would be almost a prodigy. Singing immediately detects the least ailment of, or accumulation on, the lungs; and their action during the exercise powerfully promotes expectoration, and thus prevents obstructed respiration. The deep breathing which takes place inflates the lungs more fully, and transfuses through the system a greater quantity of vital air, by which health is improved; and there is little doubt, judging from the accommodating properties of our nature, that when commenced in childhood, a better formation of chest is induced.

Respecting its effects on the nervous system but little need be said, as most are aware of its force in dispelling gloom and melancholy, and in promoting habitual cheerfulness. The happy effects of Music on some temperaments are so obvious that we almost incline to the inference that with them it is a natural necessity. A case illustrative of its efficacy, which occurred within my own observation, may be worth relating.

A young man of rather delicate constitution, was affected with a nervous disease, the symptoms of which were, a constant uneasiness of mind, continual sighing, and a

countenance marked with the deepest dejection. These symptoms continued for months, until life became a burden. Fortunately he became acquainted with a few young men whose leisure time was generally spent in glee-singing. From that moment he rapidly improved, and was soon free from every unhappy symptom.

The old doctrine that singing is injurious has long been exploded. In Germany, where all are singers, consumption is of rare occurrence. True it is, that like every other good, it is susceptible of abuse: the strongest man may be worked into feebleness and disease, but this still leaves untouched the fact that labour is wholesome. That good should result from singing is natural, and in perfect harmony with the laws of our being. Wherever powers of action are given and not used, diminution of those powers will assuredly ensue. Man is endowed with a musical voice, capable of contributing to the enjoyment of himself and his fellow creatures; and it cannot be supposed that the ability was given without motive.

Music, in a social point of view, has many claims. It offers an arena for innocent amusement, and draws attention from the grosser pastimes. In variety and extent it may be deemed infinite—ever presenting new attractions; and the delight to which it gives birth can be understood only by those who have experienced its influence.

By glancing at man's condition in life, and contemplating his nature, we trace the beneficence of the Creator in conferring on the world so delightful a recreation. The turmoils and anxieties of life, from which we cannot escape, seem to require an antidote; and in Music a most agreeable one is provided. Let any one unacquainted with its effects on the human mind, be at the trouble of joining, for one night at their practice, a party of tolerably good singers. No matter how sombre and dull the cares and fatigues of the day may have made them appear, he will soon see every face lighted up with perfect cheerfulness. He will soon see manifested a power capable of lifting the soul above the world's depressing influences.

The tendencies of Music, particularly vocal, in humanizing the mind; in thoroughly eradicating all moroseness of disposition; in strengthening the affections; in awakening generous sympathies; and fostering an elevated taste, have long, and by many, been observed. In their admiration of Music Shakspeare and Milton were almost enthusiastic; and so generally is singing now appreciated, that few respectable seminaries in Europe can be found in which it is not taught.