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MR. ADGATE'S NEW PLAN of SOLFAING, *Examined.*

THERE has lately appeared in America, a new and improved plan of Solfaing, by Andrew Adgate, P. U. A ; and as the public are not sufficiently acquainted either with the man or his work, I shall make no apology for announcing them.

Before I enter upon the examination of Mr. Adgate's plan, I shall give a simple explanation of his title P. U. A.

Mr. Adgate has taught a common singing school in Philadelphia, where schools of every kind frequently attain the name of Academies. Mr. Adgate called *his*, the Uranian Academy, and himself the President. But the teachers of such schools, are commonly called, Masters ; not Presidents. Mr. Adgate must therefore have assumed the epithet of President, or borrowed it from a foreign institution ; thus becoming the President of the Uranian Academy, P. U. A. And as each of these ways partake equally of ease and propriety, we are at liberty to ascribe his choice to which we please. Here then, the origin of Mr. Adgate's degree, or title is investigated. I will bestow a few words upon the importance of it. The school which Mr. Adgate taught, was never incorporated, and there are a thousand schools of equal importance in the United States. In many of these schools the instructors are frequently changed, and every person who has ever had the charge of one of them, has an equal right to a title with Mr. Adgate. Were the generality of singing Masters either vain enough to adopt an insignificant title, Mr. Adgate would undoubtedly have a right to the privilege, without being called to an account for his conduct. Becoming a common thing, and being understood by the public, it would immediately cease to be an imposition.

But I will hasten to an examination of Mr. Adgate's new and improved plan. As yet, I have only noticed his name as it stands, connected with his title. But if he has merit in his work, it shall be credited to him. The splendor of his abilities shall be made a cloak for his follies, and his faults shall be overlooked amidst his great and useful discoveries and improvements.

He is pleased to call his plan, a *new* one ; alledging, that the *old* British mode is totally rejected. But as to the novelty of his scheme, I shall take the liberty of contradicting him. It is not a *new* plan. It has been known for ages in Italy and other countries ; and the essential part of it has long since undergone a trial, and been rejected by those very Britons, whose *old* mode our author boasts of displacing by *his new*. The truth of this assertion is sufficiently evinced by Music books published in England. Two of these books, I was possessed of, long before Mr. Adgate knew a syllable about Music ; and upwards of eight years have elapsed, since I was myself solicited to publish this method. For reasons, as I thought, abundantly sufficient, I refused. Where then is the propriety of Mr. Adgate's calling his plan a *new* plan ? It is, indeed, a little extraordinary, that he should adopt an obsolete system and claim it, as an invention of his own. But even *this* is not *new*. The same farce had been acted before. Ethan Allen had revived, and republished the, Oracles of Reason, as a *new* plan ; and Andrew Adgate has revived, and republished, fa so la, ba do na, as a *new* plan. But since he has chosen to adopt it, as his *own*, he may take it to himself ; nobody will dispute with him for the *honour* of the invention ; and nobody will believe that he was the *inventor*. However, by claiming it as his *own*, he has at least taken upon himself to defend it ; and he has asserted, not only the novelty, but the *improvement* of the plan. Leaving him to reconcile the possibility of a plan's being *new*, and yet at the same instant, *improved*, I shall proceed to enquire, in what respects it is preferable to the common method.

Permit me, however, previously to remark, that a very strong presumption arises against this system, on account of its having been tried and rejected in England. But as Mr. Adgate thinks it beautiful, and as it has gained some ground in America, we will give it an examination.

Having told us, that his plan possesses *many* advantages above the *old* British method, Mr. Adgate has mentioned only *two*. One of these respects the addition of singing syllables ; and the other, the acquisition of the semi-tones ; the latter of which is no ways applicable to *his*, any more than to the *common* method, as I shall have occasion to show after I have considered the former. Instead of repeating fa so la, in each octave, he has added, ba, do, na, and he asserts, that great confusion will be avoided, by means of associating with each syllable the idea of its proper sound. But did not Mr. Adgate know, that syl-

lables were not the signs of musical sounds ? It is the situation of the notes upon the staff, which determines their sounds. The syllables are only the mediums, thro which such sounds are expressed ; and they *may* be expressed without the syllables, as is the case every time a tune is sung to the words of a psalm, where neither *faw sol law*, nor *ba do na*, occur. Did we, as Mr. Adgate intimates, associate with each syllable, the idea of its proper sound ; and were there no more sounds, than he has used syllables, we might as well reject the lines and spaces, and learn to sing, merely by the interchanges of *faw sol law*, *ba do na*, *mi*. Having discovered, that the repetition of singing syllables was the cause of great perplexity to the pupil, he proceeds to illustrate it by an example ; and the instance he has given, tho it makes directly against him, was as much to his purpose as any he could have chosen. Set a learner, says he, to sing at first sight, after he has made a tolerable proficiency, and if he is founding *sol* above the key note, and *faw*, the fourth above the key follows, he will descend to *faw*, the key note ! We should judge, that a pupil was *not* a tolerable proficient till he knew the difference between rising and falling. His ear must be very bad indeed, and his judgment still worse, if he could not, by the help of an able instructor, immediately discover the difference ; even if there were no lines and spaces to assist his conception. But when the staff is before his eyes ; when he sees, that a note is situated upon a line, or a space, three notes higher than the one he has just founded, can it be supposed, that he will give it the sound of *faw* the key note ? It is by means of our sight, contemplating the position of a note upon the staff, that we must get the idea of the sound, which it requires ; and when it is founded, it is by means of our hearing, that we must get the idea of the sound, which is actually given it. In neither case are we at all dependant upon the syllable with which it is connected, or expressed. Syllables, in music, are not the signs of particular sounds ; as names, in language, are the signs of particular things ; and I shall have occasion to prove, that, even Mr. Adgate's syllables are far from being the signs of certain sounds. A single syllable is sufficient to express the whole variety of musical sounds. Does it then become a question why *four* syllables are used instead of *one* ? The answer is easy. To consult convenience by means of variety. Were it not tiresome to repeat one syllable continually, there would be no need of *more* than one. But constant experience proves, that it is tiresome, and that more than one *are* necessary. By the use of four syllables, *mi*, *faw sol law*, the variety is found to be sufficient ; and these syllables sung according to the directions, which I have given, are admirably calculated for the purpose to which they are appropriated. For tho, they can not assist us in attaining sounds, yet, they *may*, and *do* assist us in making those sounds, when attained. They assist in forming the organs of sound into a position for making more open, soft and smooth tones.

But even if we should violate every dictate of reason and experience, and suppose it necessary to increase the common num-

ber of singing syllables, Mr. Adgate has been extremely injudicious in the addition, which he has made ; and I must do the Italian writers upon the subject the justice of remarking, that, instead of making any *improvement*, or inventing any *new* system, Mr. Adgate has really adulterated their *old* one. For, instead of copying *their* addition, si do ra, he has changed si into ba, and ra into na ; neither of which is so good as the original. If the organs of sound are put into a position for expressing a note by the syllable ba or do, the voice will be forced suddenly upon the expression, and it will inevitably produce a blunt, dead sound, much like the sound of a Blacksmith's hammer upon his anvil. Mr. Adgate, (having been accustomed to such sounds,) may have no objections upon this account ; but to others, the objection will certainly be formidable. The sound of na is a nasal sound, and leads to a habit of singing through the nose ; and the mi, as he pronounces it (me,) inclines to a habit of singing thro the teeth : habits which destroy the beauty of music, and which ought to be sedulously avoided.

Thus far Mr. Adgate is inconsistent with *nature* ; but he is doubly inconsistent, for he is not even consistent with *himself*. A crazy man, who imagines that his body is made of glass, is very careful about striking against any thing, lest he should dash it to pieces. *He* reasons consistently, admitting his premises to be good ; but Mr. Adgate does not do so much. Having set out with a false principle, he stops short in his way ; neither retracting it, nor carrying it through. He talks about associating with each syllable the idea of its proper sound, and yet he gives us but seven syllables, as though there were no more than seven sounds. This can never be admitted ; and even Mr. Adgate is more sober, as often as he looses sight of his false theory. He tells us, that the C cliff is the eleventh, and the G cliff in the treble the fifteenth sound ; and repeatedly asserts, that the extent of the human voice, from the bass to the treble inclusive, comprehends three octaves, or twenty two sounds. If then he would associate to each syllable the idea of a certain sound, instead of seven, he must, upon his own footing, use twenty two syllables ; exclusive of the semi tones. He entirely confounds the use of the terms, *notes*, *sounds*, and *syllables* ; for he asserts, that experience teaches us to associate certain syllables with the ideas of their proper sounds. The fact is, we never do associate a certain syllable with the idea of a proper sound. Experience teaches us to know what sounds, notes, differently situated upon the staff, stand for ; or rather, our seeing the notes upon the staff excites in our minds the ideas of the proper sounds, by which they are to be expressed ; and when they are once excited, they may be expressed by one, or by four, or by seven, or by all the syllables in a common psalm. The ideas of the sounds being excited, we can as well express one sound by *fa*, the key note, and another by *fa*, the *fourth above* the key upon the *common* method, as we can express one sound by *fa*, and another, at an *octavis distance*, by *fa*, upon Mr. Adgate's method.

Will he contradict himself where he is right, and attempt to maintain himself where he is wrong, by endeavoring to prove, that there are but seven sounds ; and that, he has given a name to each of them ? It will be of no avail to him to fly to the philosophers for shelter. They would be ashamed to protect him. They have told us indeed, that there are seven *kinds* of sounds, differing in their natures and general properties ; but I believe, it was left for Mr. Adgate to discover, that there were absolutely no more than *seven* sounds. Had the philosophers told us, that there were but seven different *kinds* of animals upon the earth, would it have followed that there were but *seven* animals ? The *kinds* might have been seven, while the number of distinct, proper animals might have been *unlimited* ; as the *kinds* of sounds are seven, while the number of distinct and proper sounds is *unlimited*. Had a man undertaken to give names to each of these distinct and proper animals, the number of his names must have been unlimited ; and had Mr. Adgate carried his plan through, and associated a syllable to each distinct and proper sound, his syllable must have been unlimited ; I may add, unintelligibly confused.

I have now considered the grand superiority of Mr. Adgate's plan, as far as it is placed in the addition of three singing syllables. There is one thing more, upon which considerable stress is laid, and it shall not be neglected. It is the method, which he has adopted for the purpose of acquiring the semi-tones. He proposes altering the syllables, fa, so, ba, do, into fe, se, be, de. But this, as I before hinted, is not at all peculiar to *his* system ; for it would be as easy upon the *common* method to change faw, sol into fe, se in the *repetition*, as to change ba, do into be, de upon his plan. His proposed alteration, he has taken from the Germans, who sing by letter. In practising music, they make use of seven letters ; and for the accidental flats and sharps, they introduce those, which are different, calling them, flat and sharp letters. But before Mr. Adgate proceeded to calculate upon the advantages of his proposal, he ought to have proved, that it was more easy to sharp a sound by the syllables, fe and se, than by faw and sol. The accidental semi-tones are not to be exclusively expressed by any particular kind of syllables ; if so, they could not be sung to the various syllables in a psalm or hymn, to which they indiscriminately fall. They are discovered by means of the flats, sharps and naturals inserted in a tune, and where once discovered, they may be sung as well, and even *better* by faw, than by fe. Feeling a sound does not sharp it. Mr. Adgate, in treating upon semi-tones, seems to have continued his inconsistency of imagining a kind of a necessary connection between sounds, and the syllables by which they are expressed ; and accordingly, when the me (mi) is preceded by an accidental flat, or natural, he tells us to, *maru* it ; that is, give it a duller sound. This seems to be going upon the presumption, that it is always a sharp sound, when expressed by the syllable, me. But the sounds of me, fe, se, de, and the like, are not sharp sounds ; unless singing through the teeth, is what constitutes the sharpness of sounds. That these syllables are dentals, will be allowed : and that, if used in

singing, they will lead to a habit of singing through the teeth, can not be denied ; but, that compressing the teeth together, and forcing the sound violently through them, is what constitutes the sharpening of musical tones, *will* be denied. By the various authors, which I have consulted upon the subject of sounds, previous to Mr. Adgate, I have been led to believe, that a round pipe would produce a sharpened sound, as well as a natural or flatted sound ; but now, I am taught to believe, that it depends upon the flatness of the pipe. It is no longer any matter about its size, or length, for a flat or sharp sound depends upon the shape of the pipe.

I find, that those who have adopted Mr. Adgate's plan, instead of sharpening sounds properly, only sing them through the teeth ; and in this way they sharp sounds, where they ought not to be sharpened. When ever they sing the syllable ba, to a note, they sharp it to a degree ; and the sound of ba, is as much sharper than the sound of fa, as the sound of be is sharper than that of ba.

I am very confident, that a person will obtain a knowledge of the semi-tones sooner without Mr. Adgate's helps, than with ; for so long as he depends upon the syllables for his knowledge of the sounds, he will not attend to them by his ear ; and until he can clearly discover the half-tones by his ear, he will inevitably be ignorant of them. I will mention another objection. If the sounds of fe, fe, de, &c. are sharp sounds, then all similar syllables will also produce sharp sounds ; and the English language abounds with them, so that almost every note in a common plain tune, sung to a psalm of a moderate length, will be sharpened, or sung through the teeth, before the psalm is concluded. This objection is not imaginary. Of its reality, I am certain, from the performance of those, who have been taught upon Mr. Adgate's plan. And this objection affects, not plain tunes only ; it also extends to all music whatsoever. Even music, set to particular words, must be altered : for, in a great variety of instances, there are of this kind of syllables applied to notes, which are not sharpened. Mr. Adgate asserts, without any foundation, that the *common* method, in some instances destroys the beauty of composition ; but I think, that his method destroys the beauty of composition, almost universally. It is in vain for him to tell us, that we may make use of these syllables, as assistants to learn the sharpened notes, and then sing these *same*, or *similar* syllables, without sharpening the notes, which they are used to express.

But after all Mr. Adgate's boasting about his *new* and *improved* plan, he has led us into a labyrinth, and meanly deserted us, without conducting us through ; for, except the mi, he has made no provision for flatted notes, nor for any, which

are sharpened at the beginning of a tune, and restored by accidental naturals. Instances of which are very common in the sublimest pieces of music : but upon Mr. Adgate's plan, we know not what to do with them.

I have now considered the superiority of Mr. Adgate's plan with regard both to singing syllables, and the semi-tones. Were it to my purpose, I could easily show, that he is as ignorant of language, as he is of his art ; but it has been my business to expose the errors of his system, not his grammatical blunders ; and I shall now take my leave, for the present, of the new and improved plan of Solfaing, by Andrew Adgate, P. U. A ; and leave the reader to make his own reflections.



No. I. Philadelphia.

1

gs *S:*
S:
S: Thou art my portion, O my God; Soon as I know thy way, My heart makes
gs *S:*
S:

S:
S:
 haste t'o-bey thy word, And suf-fers no de-lay *S:* I choose the path of heav'nly truth, And
S:

A

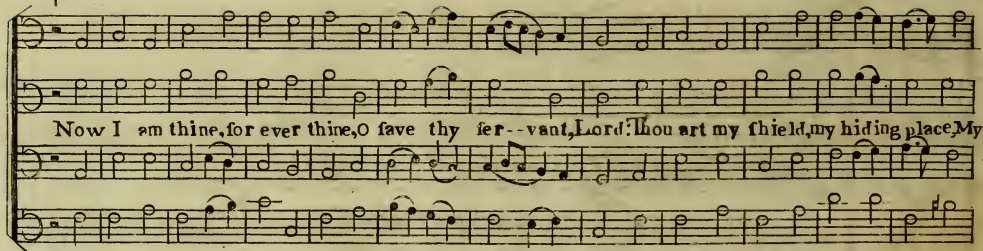
2

glo - - ry in my choice, Not all the rich-es of the earth, Could make me so re-joice.

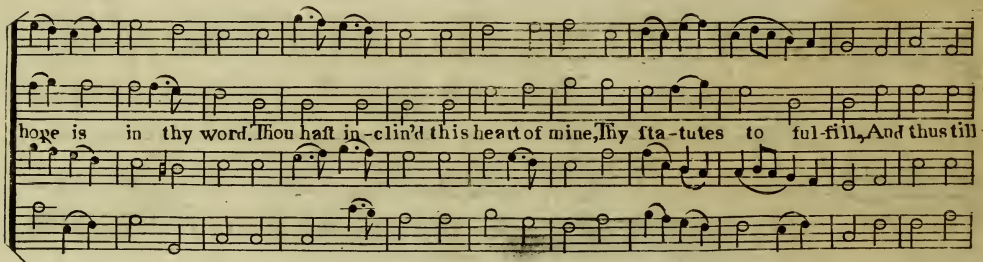
The tes-ti-mo-nies of thy grace I set be- - - fore mine eyes, Thence I de- - rive my

dai - ly strength, And there my com...fort lies. If once I wander from thy path, I think

up - on my ways; Then turn my feet to thy commands, And trust thy pard'-ning grace.



Now I am thine, for ever thine, O save thy ser--vant, Lord! Thou art my shield, my hiding place, My



hope is in thy word. Thou hast in-clin'd this heart of mine, Thy sta-tutes to ful-fill, And thus till

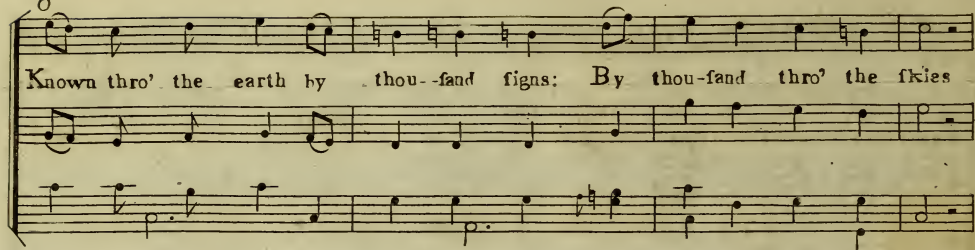
5

mortal life shall end Would I per--form thy will, and thus

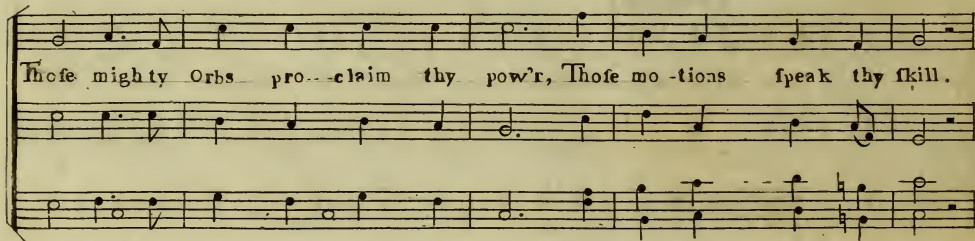
Boston

g♯ *b* C Fa-ther, Fa-ther, how wide thy glo ry shines! How high thy won-ders rise!

6



Known thro' the earth by thou-sand signs: By thou-sand thro' the skies



Those mighty Orbs pro-claim thy pow'r, Those mo-tions speak thy skill.

:S: Soft 7

And on the wings of ev'-ry hour, We read thy pa--tience still.

This system contains three staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line with a soprano clef and a 'Soft' dynamic marking. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the middle staff. The system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

:S:

But when we view thy great de--sign to save re--bel-lious worms, Where

This system contains three staves of music. The top staff is a vocal line with a soprano clef. The middle and bottom staves are piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the middle staff. The system ends with a double bar line and a repeat sign.

Soft

ven-geance and com-pas-sion join in their di-vin-est forms. Here the whole

loud

De-i-ty is known, Nor dares a crea-ture guess, Which of the glo-ries bright-est

9

phone, The justice or the grace. Now the full glo-ries of the Lamb,

A--dorn the heav'n-ly plains, Bright se--raphs learn Im--man-u--els name, and

B

try their choicest strains. O, may I bear some humble part in that im-mor-tal song.

S. soft repeated loud.

Won-der and joy shall tune my heart, and love com-mand my tongue.

S.

Baltimore.

soft

loud

11

gs *S:*

To God, to God the only wise, our Saviour and our King, Let all the saints

soft

below the skies Their humble praises bring, their humble praises bring. Let all the

loud

soft

faints be-low the skies Their humble praises bring their humble praises bring. 'Tis his al-

mighty love, His counfel and his care, Preserves us safe from sin and death from sin and death,

loud . . . Organ soft 13

preserves us safe from sin and death, from sin and death, And ev'ry hurt-ful

Organ soft

snare. He shall present his saints un-blemish'd and compleat Before the glo-ry of his face

snare. He shall present his saints un-blemish'd and compleat Before the glo-ry of his face

Organ soft

With joys di-vine-ly great di-vine-ly great with joys - - - di-vine-ly great.

soft

Then all the chosen seed, Shall meet around his throne, Shall bless the conduct of his grace,

:S: lively soft 15

And make his wonders known, and make his wonders known. To our Redeemer God, to our

loud soft loud 1 2

Re deemer God, Wisdom and pow'r, wisdom and pow'r, wisdom and pow'r belongs.

1 2

16

:S:

soft

Immortal crowns of ma-jes-ty and e-ver---last-ing songs, and e-ver-

:S:

loud

1 2

--last-ing songs, Im-mor--tal Crowns of majes--ty and e-ver-last-ing songs.

1 2

1 2