

THE MISSOURI HARMONY

A famous oblong song book of the pioneer days in the middle west was "The Missouri Harmony," published in 1808 by Morgan and Sanxay of Cincinnati. Young Abraham Lincoln and his sweetheart, Ann Rutledge, sang from this book in the Rutledge tavern in New Salem, according to old settlers there. It was used at camp meetings of Peter Cartwright and other circuit riding evangelists, and was highly thought of by many church members in the Mississippi Valley.

Though the volume included "Legacy" an Irish drinking song, praising "balmy drops of the red grape," the author in his instructions to singers, warned them: "A cold or cough, all kinds of spiritous liquors, violent exercise, bile upon the stomach, long fasting, the veins overcharged with impure blood, etc., etc., are destructive to the voice of one who is much in the habit of singing. A frequent use of spiritous liquors will speedily ruin the best voice."

In further advice on vocal hygiene, he declared, "A frequent use of some acid drink, such as purified cider, elixir of vitriol with water, vinegar, etc., if used sparingly is strengthening to the lungs."

The author of the "supplement" on how to sing, kept himself anonymous, the title page saying the book was "By An Amateur." He desired his readers to know "the superiority of vocal to instrumental music is, that while one only pleases the ear, the other informs the understanding." Under the head of "General Observations," he gave these hints on the frame of mind singers should try for: "There should not be any noise indulged in while singing (except the music) as it destroys entirely the beauty of harmony, and renders the performance (especially to learners) very difficult; and if it is designedly promoted, it is nothing less than a proof of disrespect in the singers to the exercise, to themselves who occasion it, and to the Author of our existence."

"All 'affectation' should be banished. It is disgusting in the performance of sacred music, and contrary to that solemnity which should accompany an exercise so near akin to that which will through all eternity engage the attention of those who walk 'in climes of bliss.'" "The great Jehovah, who implanted in our nature the noble faculty of vocal performance, is jealous of the use to which we apply our talents in that particular lest we exercise them in a way which does not tend to glorify his name."

The pages from the "Missouri Harmony," reproduced here, contain at least two songs with which Abraham Lincoln had close acquaintance. Dennis Hanks, a cousin of Lincoln, has related that in Spencer County, Indiana, the song, "How Tedious and Tasteless the Hours," (Greenfields), was well-known, and New Salem, Illinois, residents have told of how Lincoln parodied "Legacy."



THE MISSOURI HARMONY;



OR A COLLECTION OF

PSALM AND HYMN TUNES, AND ANTHEMS,

FROM EMINENT AUTHORS:

WITH AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GROUNDS AND RUDIMENTS OF MUSIC.

BY ALLEN D. CARDEN.

WINDSOR. C. M.

My God, how many are my fears, How fast my foes increase: Their number how it multiplies! How fatal to my peace.

Above are lines from the title page of The Missouri Harmony, a songbook published in 1808 in Cincinnati, and widely used among midwest pioneers. Below is a photograph of the hymn music of Windsor.

GREENFIELDS 82

How tedious and last-levs the hours, When J'cess no longer I see; Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flow'rs Have all lost their sweet faces to me.
The midsummer sun shines but dim, The bells strive in vain to look gay; But when I am happy in Him, December's as pleasant as May.

WORTHINGTON. C. M.

Then we adore eternal gams,
And humbly own to thee; How feeble is our mortal frame,
How feeble is our mortal frame,
How dying worms, whatly we, &c.

When Dennis Hanks was asked what songs the Lincolns and Hankses sang in their years in Spencer County, Indiana, he said one was, "How tejus and tasteless the hours." The Missouri Harmony presented it as Greenfields, as above. The depths of humility in Worthington, below, is characteristic, with its cry, "What dying worms are we."

HIGHBRIDGE L. M.

Through ev'ry age eternal God, Thou art our rest, our safe abode; High was thy throne ere heav'n was made, Or earth thy humble footstool laid.

3 Long hast thou reign'd ere time began, Or dust was fashion'd into man; And long thy kingdom shall endure, When earth and time shall be no more.

3 But man, weak man, is born to die, Made up of guilt and vanity: Thy dreadful sentence, Lord, was just, "Victims ye sinners to your dust."

4 Death, like an overflowing stream, Sweeps us away; Our life's a dream, An empty tale—a morning dower, Cut down and wither'd in an hour.

5 Teach us, O Lord, how frail is man, And kindly lengthen out his span, Till a wise career of piety Fit us to die and dwell with Thee.

LEGACY. 8 & 10.

When in death I shall calm recline,
Tell her it liv'd on smiles and wine

O bear my heart to my mistress dear,
Of brightest hue while it linger'd here.

Bid her not shed one tear of sorrow
To sully a heart so brilliant and light;

But balmy drops of the red grape borrow
To bathe the ricket from dawn till night.

The two songs on this page from *The Missouri Harmony* are opposites in tone and feeling. The one above, *Highbridge*, is solemn, pious, humble. The one below, *Legacy*, is an old Irish air with words by Thomas Moore; the tune was used by country fiddlers at dances.