

**THE NEW SONG
IN HEAVEN**

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The new song in heaven by Phillips Brooks

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PHILLIPS BROOKS

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IN HEAVEN**

BY THE
RIGHT REV.
PHILLIPS BROOKS, D.D.

LATE BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE
OF MASSACHUSETTS

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This Sermon was written in 1867

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THE
NEW SONG IN HEAVEN

*And they sang as it were a new song
before the throne. — Rev. xiv. 3.*

SAINT John does not tell us what the song was that he heard in his vision, but only that it was "a new song," which no man could learn but the four hundred and forty and four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. He was not yet one of those redeemed and glorified himself, therefore even he could not learn the song. It came to him out of a higher region, and while he felt its sublimity and beauty he could not fully understand it. It was in heaven and he was on earth, and so he could only know of it that it was "a new song" and that much of it was

past his comprehension and recital. He must have felt about it as we sometimes feel with regard to nature. Are there not with all of us times when we love nature most and are most in harmony with her, and yet feel that all her notes, her winds, her buds and streams and waving trees, have meanings that we do not fathom, are a new song before the throne of God which we vaguely love but cannot learn?

Some of our best inspirations and helps come to us from such songs above us. We hear their music, we discern their spirit, but their exact sense is hid from us. The character of St. John's vision seems to be repeated in every exaltation that we gather from the life and character of any fellow-being

which fills us with admiration and a desire to imitate it, while the law and method under which it is lived is too high for us to reach. The ambitions of the best minds, the self-sacrifices of the best martyrs, the prayers and ascriptions of the best saints, perhaps more than all the purity of the purest childhood, — with each of these we live, continually listening to the song that it is singing before God's throne. I say, especially with children, for there is nothing that reproduces the celestial harmony upon our uncelestial earth so nearly as their lives do: "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." In the unworldliness, the ready affection, the pure tastes, the impulsive faith, the fresh, hopeful enthusiasm of the truest child,

where is the man, past his own childhood, who does not hear a music that from day to day enchains his love and mocks his comprehension?

And so it seems to be with every man's life who is led into any higher devotion or holiness than his fellowmen. His acts and words become songs that they hear in visions, and that tempt them on to where he is. I feel about any one of our soldiers who lived and died as bravely and purely as the best of them did, that, much as I love to think of him, I do not comprehend him. I could not unless I had been what he was. I feel that his life sang a song of duty before the throne, which none can learn but they who have been re-

deemed with him into the same great privilege and glory.

So when you and I listen to the words or watch the lives of the noblest servants of God, when we read Wesley's hymns or Robertson's sermons, when we live with Franke in his Orphan House, or walk with Mrs. Fry through the prisons and lunatic asylums, the nearer we draw to them the more we feel how largely their lives are incomprehensible to us, for the like can only thoroughly know its like. Their words and works come to us like songs from far above. Or have you never felt,—when you have heard a holy man's thanks to God for a day which outwardly you and he had lived alike, when you marvelled at the