

Three Songs from New Harmony

Paul G. Brewster*

Two hymns and a song were collected by the writer in New Harmony, Indiana, in the summer of 1935. Both the texts and the tunes of all three were contributed by Mrs. Nora Fretageot, librarian of the Workingmen's Institute Library at that time.

The hymns were composed and sung by members of the Rappite sect, known also at a later date as Harmonists or Harmonites. The earlier and more common appellation derives from the name of the leader, George Rapp, who founded the sect in Germany near the end of the eighteenth century. Because of persecutions there, the sect came to America, settling first in Butler County, Pennsylvania, in 1803-1804. In the following year the Rappites founded here the community of Harmony. Five years later the community consisted of one hundred forty families or between seven and eight hundred persons. Here they continued to live until 1814, when they sold their holdings and bought land in what was at that time Indiana Territory. At their new home they enlarged their operations in every department of business, cultivated more land, raised more stock, erected larger mills and more extensive factories for the manufacture of woolen and cotton goods, and extended their vineyards and the production of wine. Soon they became the business center for that area. In 1825 they sold their extensive holdings to Robert Owen and removed to Pennsylvania. Even after the death of Rapp in 1847 the Society continued to flourish, but there was a steady decline in membership. In the spring of 1903 all lands belonging to the sect were sold to the Liberty Land Company and the proceeds were divided among the surviving members. On December 5, 1905, the Society was dissolved.¹

The Rappite hymns were for many years in manuscript, as the sect had no printing facilities until 1824. Whether they

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¹ Aaron Williams, *The Harmony Society, at Economy, Penn'a* (Pittsburgh, 1866), 25-28, 35-40, 54, 60-63; John S. Duss, *The Harmonists: A Personal History* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, 1943), 355-361, 387; John C. Andressohn, "The Arrival of the Rappites at New Harmony," *Indiana Magazine of History* (Bloomington, 1905-), XLII (1946), 395-409; Elfrieda Lang, "The Inhabitants of New Harmony According to the Federal Census of 1850," *ibid.*, 360-362.

were composed before the Rappites left Germany or after their arrival in the New World is not known.

"Children of Friendship and Love" was translated into English in the early part of the twentieth century by a nephew of Jacob Henrici, who was one of the trustees of the Society and also its organist and singing teacher.²

"Beauteous is the Great Wide World" was translated for the writer in 1935 by the last surviving member of the Society, John S. Duss, of Ambridge, Pennsylvania. Duss had been taken into the Society as a baby when his mother was admitted to membership in the early 1860's.³

The ode "Land of the West" was written by Stedman Whitwell⁴ on board the packet "New York" bringing the Owen party to America; the music was composed by Señor Garcia, a musician friend of his aboard. In March, 1826, it was sung at one of the social meetings in New Harmony by two pupils of Madame Fretageot.⁵ "Ebor Nova" does not appear in the text here reproduced.

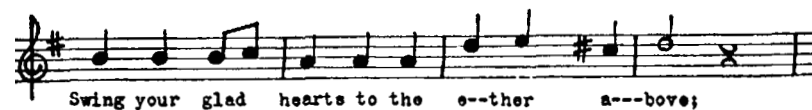
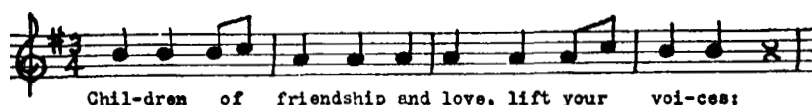
² Duss, *The Harmonists*, 94-102, 368. At the time of Rapp's death Romelius L. Baker and Jacob Henrici were appointed trustees to transact the Society's external and financial affairs. When Baker died on January 13, 1868, Henrici became the senior trustee.

³ *Ibid.*, 119-121.

⁴ Whitwell, an architect of London, is perhaps better known as the inventor of a system of nomenclature by which the name of a place would indicate by its spelling its latitude and longitude, each letter or diphthong representing a number. According to this ingenious system, New Harmony (38.11 N., 87.55 W.) became *Ipba Veinul*; London was *Lafa-Tovutu*. It is hardly necessary to add that it did not meet with wide acceptance. See *New Harmony Gazette*, April 12, 1826.

⁵ Robert Dale Owen, *Threading My Way: Twenty-Seven Years of Autobiography* (London, 1874), 260-263; *New Harmony, Indiana, Gazette*, March 15, 1826; "The Diaries of Donald Macdonald, 1824-1826," in *Indiana Historical Society Publications* (Indianapolis, 1895-), XIV (1942), 307; *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada, Europeo-Americana* (70 vols., Barcelona, n.d.), XXV, 764, 765, 808-809, 829. The song was printed in the last number of the weekly newspaper, *Gazette*, which the passengers called *Sextant*, published on board ship and was afterwards published in New York under the title "Ebor Nova." The composer was Manuel del Popolo Vicente Garcia, who was taking an operatic troupe to New York following a successful season in London. After some time in New York, the troupe continued on to Mexico, where it had an unlucky encounter with bandits. Soon after, the elder Garcia sailed for Paris, where he died in 1832. Also in the Garcia party were Maria, who at seventeen had made a very successful debut in London the previous spring; Pauline, only four at this time but later to become a noted singer; and Manuel, basso, writer, and teacher of voice, who was later to have Jenny Lind as one of his pupils.

Children of Friendship and Love



Children of friendship and love, lift your voices,
Sing the sweet bond that uplifts and rejoices.
Joyfully sounding divine friendship's praises,
Join the great hymn the angelic host raises;
In grateful homage to heavenly love
Swing your glad hearts to the ether above.

Lo! from the throne there the bright fountain gushes;
Through the wide heavens the crystal flood rushes—
Pure holy friendship, from sun to sun streaming,
Filling all space with its blessed mild beaming!
Love rules the universe; through it alone
Can real blessedness ever be known!

In bonds of friendship the spheres are united;
Seraphs and angels in friendship are plighted.
Patient and loving, it meets ev'ry trial;
Freely forgives, with divine self-denial.
Were its pure ray into hell to descend,
Hell at that moment would come to an end.

Friendship is shield against arrows of malice,
Holds to the suff'rer the life-giving chalice,
Gives to the starving friend food to restore him,
Warns and protects him when danger hangs o'er him,
Brings to the dying couch heavenly rest,
Folds the poor erring one close to the breast.

Angel of friendship, abide with us ever;
 Comfort and guide us; abandon us never.
 Fill ev'ry spirit with good will to others;
 Grant us in friendship and love to be brothers.
 Hate and suspicion, depart from our ways!
 Angel of friendship, we bring thee our praise!

(Lines three and four of each stanza are sung to the same notes as lines one and two, and the last line of each stanza is repeated.)

Beauteous is the Great Wide World



Still what is all of life's alloy?
 Scan it with probation—
 You will find all earthly joy
 But of short duration.

Though one be in treasures rich,
 Gold makes no one wiser.
 And in death are all alike,
 Beggar, Pope, and Kaiser.

No one, but by Christly life,
 Heaps eternal treasures;
 And through noble toil and strife
 Enters heavenly pleasures.

Land of the West

