

"Gone, is he?" said the day-nurse two hours afterward. "Well, it's only what I expected—it was a hopeless case. Alone with him, were you? Did you have no help?"

"I had all the help I needed," she

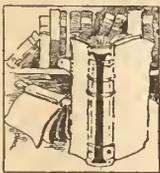
replied. She spoke quietly, and looked straight forward as she spoke.

"He died quiet and unconscious, then? There was no struggle, was there?"

"None—to speak of," said Steve Corvin's wife.

AN OLD NEW ENGLAND HYMN-BOOK.

By Helen Marshall North.



IN the book-racks of an old New England meeting-house we find the fresh modern hymn and tune books; but tucked in by their decorous sides one occasionally sees the old "Watts and Select," which has been in good and regular standing so long that its friends hesitate to excommunicate it.

This same old "Watts and Select" was used within the memory of one little girl not so many decades ago, and was her one recreation in the old church, on a Sabbath morning, after she had carefully regarded all the bonnets and shawls of the congregation in the hope of finding a new one; had ascertained that each family was in its proper place and that the particular rosy-checked friend whom she met but once in the week was on hand and that hence a little diversion might be expected; and had counted all the knot-holes with which some thrifty builder had decorated the walls.

When the minister was well started on his way through "firstly," "secondly" and so on up to "tenthly," from which he made an apparently abrupt backward march to something that sounded like, "In view of this subject, Friday, March first, second" and so on, but which later intelligence discovered to be, "I remark first, second" and so on,—then this little girl was allowed to slip down to a seat on the long footstool and study her good friend, the hymn-book. The kind mother-hand, in an especially shiny dark green kid glove, occasionally reached down to smooth the forehead of

the young hymn-reader, and the little girl loved to fondle that dear hand, which was small, too, and the pleasant dark green, glossy glove. The big brother with mischievous eyes was securely stationed between the parents, out of harm's way, and the sermon went on and on and on, as the little girl turned the leaves.

The old book was particularly fat, bursting with interesting things and with many mysteries, too, which could not be fathomed by the child. The treasures were arranged in groups: first the Psalms; then, Books First, Second and Third; then the Select; and lastly, the "Occasional Pieces," whose real meaning was one of the little girl's unsolved mysteries. It was as exciting as a play to guess from which one of these groups the minister would make a selection; and she wondered much at the mental strength which enabled the good man to choose in the midst of such an embarrassment of interesting things. And how did he know what verses to omit?—for it was then the fashion to omit something from a hymn. And how interesting it all was when she was old enough to find, with her plump little fingers, Book Second, Hymn 167, or Select Hymn 95, or Psalm 99, second part. Somehow, the Occasional Pieces were never chosen,—and they so full of mysteries! There were some after which one read, "Anc. Lyre;" and the little girl had never heard of a lyre or an anc. A great many were marked "Ibid,"—and that meant no more to her than did the "Anc. Lyre."

Another mystery was the little groups of initials which preceded each hymn or psalm. Sometimes it was "L. P. M.," or

"H. M.," or "S. M.," or, more frequently, "C. M." and "L. M." And sometimes, when no initials were found, there were some even more perplexing figures, that seemed to mean nothing at all, such as, "8's, 7's and 4's;" "7's and 6's," or "7's" alone.

The little girl grew very weary trying to solve this particular mystery; but she intended to work it out by herself, and would not permit herself to ask an older person's assistance.

"Pause the First" and "Pause the Second," interpolated in the midst of a hymn of sixteen verses, appeared to give the singers a chance to rest, should the minister ever let his imagination run riot in one of these selections; but the little girl could not discover that he really ever did make use of one of these portentous hymns, though she watched very closely and with eager anticipation. The Sunday when she stayed at home with the measles, and that other when a great freshet washed away the bridge so that none of the family went to church, had an added wretchedness because of her fear that an Occasional Piece or a Pause Psalm might be sung.

In several hymns there were bracketed verses, though the little girl did not so name them at the time; and she solved this mystery by supposing that the writer of these hymns considered the verses so treated as of less value than the others and always to be omitted by the choir. Then she wondered why, since he considered them inferior, he should have used them at all.

In addition to all these marks and signs and other mysteries, many of the hymns fairly bristled with tiny letters, usually set at the left of a line; and sometimes there was one or even more at the beginning of a line, thus:—

- d* Hark! the Eternal rends the sky;
a A mighty voice before him goes,—
b A voice of music to his friends,
u But threatening thunder to his foes.

Not till many years later, when she had learned to read the long words in the preface, did the little girl discover that the careful compiler of the hymn-book had devised a "key of expression" for the use of choirs, and that "b"

indicated "quick and soft;" "d," "variously distinctive;" (but both of these words in such connection continued a long mystery); "s," "quick and loud;" "u," "very quick;" and so on. She felt quite sure that, had she written the hymn-book, every line would have been marked "u."

And then she wondered at the superior ability of a choir that could change so rapidly from "variously distinctive," for example, whatever it might mean, to "quick and soft," or from very loud to "variously distinctive," without ever making a mistake or losing their places. But the choir, perched under the roof, with the long, thin tune-books and the thick, fat hymn-books, and the long veils and graceful, considered motions and general dignity-of demeanor, was a wonderful company, always to be gazed on with admiring reverence.

Another subject for Sunday morning musings over "Watts and Select" was the curious arrangement of some of the H. M. and P. M. hymns in this fashion:—

"O let my feet Nor rove nor seek
 Ne'er run astray, The crooked way."

and,

"Awakes his wrath As lions roar
 Without delay And tear the prey."

"He is a friend Divinely kind,
 And brother too, Divinely true."

In this latter instance, and in many others, one could read across as well as up and down, and the variety afforded not a little diversion to the little girl when the minister was prolonging his sermon indefinitely and when the dark green kid glove had become absorbed in the argument and forgot to administer love pats.

It was a little difficult to read the "Psalms," which abounded in long names and were not easy to understand, even when you could pronounce the words. Some of these psalms had twenty-five and even more verses, and the one hundred and nineteenth was a perfect wilderness of metres and signs, pauses and divisions into parts,—and there were many marked "The same." The subject-matter, so far as the little girl could comprehend it, was rather frightful than

otherwise. There was much about "the sons of Adam;" and "Ye sons of Adam, vain and young," had a decidedly personal flavor. "Ye tribes of Adam, join," evidently referred to another family,—that is, the family of "Adam Join." The little girl took a fearful pleasure in reading and re-reading such verses as these:—

"Now Satan comes with dreadful roar
And threatens to destroy,
He worries whom he can't devour
With a malicious joy."

* * * * *
"Tempests of angry fire shall roll
To blast the rebel worm."

* * * * *
"Awake and mourn, ye heirs of hell,
See how the pit gapes wide for you."

* * * * *
"Justice has built a dismal hell
And laid her stores of vengeance there."

* * * * *
"Eternal plagues and heavy chains,
Tormenting racks and fiery coals,
And darts t' inflict immortal pains."

But the guiltiest and wickedest of all to the misguided fancy of the little girl, was in the "Select," and began with what seemed to her a profane joviality which greatly interested her:—

"Come on, my partners in distress,
Companions through this wilderness."

She could not comprehend the glory of that beatific vision of Wesley which forms the subject of the hymn, and in some way connected the all-around invitation apparently conveyed in these opening lines with a very vivid picture of Pharaoh and his host being drowned in the Red Sea, as seen in the illustrated family Bible, in which some very broad-faced, hideous men with flying locks seemed to be beckoning to their companions on shore to come on and share their misery.

There was something in the old book about monsters of the deep lashing their tails and roaring; and a very great deal about death and hell and the devil, besides the stray lines already quoted. The little girl soon came to understand that such as she could not belong with the saints, and that she must therefore be classed with the vile and guilty wretches

of Dr. Watts, whose authority she had no reason to question. There seemed little doubt that she was doomed to something very dreadful, and that all the pleasures that she most enjoyed must be considered "vain shows." She therefore privately decided that, since death and hell and torment were foreordained as the portion of guilty worms, and since "sons of Adam, vain and young," were under an all-embracing ban, she might as well take her pleasures as she went along. And it was at about this time that she began a systematic but not long continued course of disobedience to the commands of the owner of the green kid gloves, especially in the matter of running away from home to visit a forbidden, naughty, but very fascinating little girl of her own age.

Very mysterious and "fetching" was that hymn in the "Select," beginning, "Vital spark of heavenly flame." "Vital spark" sounded lovely and fascinating to her for some reason; and though she was far enough from understanding its real meaning, she still had a true instinct concerning its spiritual significance, which she could not have expressed in words of her own.

I am quite aware that it would have been far more to the credit of the little girl, had she preferred the mild and peaceable hymns; but these appealed less forcibly to her imagination, which was ever eager for stimulus. There was, however, a pretty verse about the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, which pleased her fancy; and another verse, bracketed, but good, beginning,

"White lilies all around appear,
And each his glory shows."

One more diversion found in the "Watts and Select" was in the index. Here the lines were short, very short, and had a curious fashion of stopping in curious places and leaving one to imagine the endings; as for instance: "Long have I sat:" "Look down, O;" "Majestic sweet;" "O what a gl. sight;" "By whom was;" "Come all;" and "Ere the blue." The study of these lines taxed her imagination considerably, and she often drew on the Nursery Rhymes to fill out these fragmentary verses, and so all

the more enjoyed the leaves of the old hymn-book.

Directly in front of the pew occupied by the little girl with her father and mother and mischievous brother, there sat a good old deacon, whose hair had a nice little curl at the ends. He wore spectacles, and always took down the text and many notes of those appalling sermons, with a very stubby pencil which never seemed to wear out, on some very dark blue note paper with wide lines. He was superintendent of the Sunday school, and gave out hymns from the "Watts and Select" to the boys and girls; but the boys and girls never sang them, only looked over while the grown people led the exercise. But because of the blue paper and the notes and the authority which this good man had acquired, doubtless from the minister himself, the little girl had a deep feeling of reverence for the good deacon, mingled with as much affection as she dared feel for a man who could take notes of the sermon, partly because, on a week-day, the deacon often gave her long and curly shavings to play with from his shop; while as for the minister, she always ran out of the house when she saw him coming, and felt more of a son of Adam than ever. The curly locks of the deacon always suggested curly shavings, and she somehow fancied that their waviness was produced in the little red shop by a process similar to that which gave a curl to the shavings on which she doted.

To-day, looking at the old hymn-book, the grown-up little girl finds an interesting study in the explanatory preface of "The Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs of the Rev. Isaac Watts, D. D., to which are added Select Hymns from other authors and directions for musical expression."

The editor states that the present edition is especially enriched with hymns which relate to the life and glory of Christ, the alarming condition of the unconverted, the feelings of the convicted and penitent . . . to times and seasons, more particularly the solemn periods of sickness and death, eternity and judgment." He also adds that "the great defect of our public psalmody in general is the want of expression. . . . That performance of psalmody, and that only, is entitled to be called good, in which the movement, quantity and the tone of voice are well adapted to the general subject, and so varied as justly to express the different thoughts, sentiments and passions. This, it is confessed, is an attainment of no small difficulty. . . . To assist singers in this essential but neglected part of good psalmody, no method appears more eligible than that of so marking the psalms and hymns by means of certain symbols, as to indicate . . . the requisite variations of movement, quantity and tone of voice. . . . The Pathetic in general . . . requires the slow and soft; the Grand requires slow and loud; the Beautiful, the quick and soft; . . . the short dash, after any other symbol, denotes the passage to be in all respects common, *i. e.*, to be sung without any particular expression."

But there is not a word of explanation about the "variously distinctive."

One could scarcely find a greater contrast than is presented by the old hymn-book and the gospel songs of to-day. Doubtless the latter would have been regarded as greatly lacking in strong, doctrinal flavor, in the days of the singing of the "Watts and Select," and as conducive to but a flabby and effeminate type of Christianity.

