

Papers read before
The Presbyterian
Sabbath School Superintendent Assc.

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PAPERS

READ BEFORE

THE PRESBYTERIAN

Sabbath-School Superintendents' Association,

ON

Sabbath-School Hymn and Tune Book,

BY

WILLIAM H. CASTLE, WILLIAM H. SCOTT,

FRANCIS B. REEVES.

A PAPER ON

“MUSIC AND MUSIC BOOKS FOR SABBATH SCHOOLS,”

Read at the meeting of the Presbyterian Sabbath-School Superintendents' Association, Monday evening, November 21st, 1887.

BY WILLIAM H. CASTLE.

In view of the fact, that of the making of Hymn and Tune Books there is no end, one might charge that the title of our “Tea Table Talk” to-night was hypercritical, but where is the Sunday-school Superintendent who finds all he wants in any of these hymn and tune books? Therefore, I propose to outline such a book as experience shows that the Sunday-school needs; not that there are no good books, far from it; but the trouble is, that these books are not comprehensive enough.

The Gospel hymn books served a good purpose, but they were not designed for the school-room, but for the prayer meeting, although some of the hymns are suitable for our use and do good service; newer and much better is the Westminster Hymnal, for the Sunday-schools—probably the best book in our denomination for this purpose; and as a foundation, enlarged and with a complete index of subjects, it would serve for a long time. For the regular Sabbath services in the church, a carefully selected and thoroughly prepared collection of hymns is made that is expected and does last for years, but the Sunday-school is apparently expected to use a book for a

short time only, and then a new book is published for its use, to be followed by other new books ; an excellent arrangement for music publishers, but not for the Sunday-schools, for the music and often the words of most of these new books verge on mediocrity—a few good hymns and tunes worthy of use, the remainder either old or indifferent poor—whereas we should teach children the purest and sublimest Christian poetry, set to the best music obtainable.

The Westminster Hymnal in these respects deserves praise. Many of its hymns are taken from the best collections of church music, notably such as “Saviour, again to Thy dear name ;” “The Son of God goes forth to war ;” “Hark ! what mean those holy voices ;” but many others equally good, such as “O come, all ye faithful,” “All glory, laud, and honor,” “Alleluia, thanks and glory,” are omitted. The Sunday School Hymnal and Service Book used by the Protestant Episcopal Schools is an excellent work, containing some three hundred and fifty hymns and one hundred and fifty chants. This book has many Christmas carols and hymns, Easter and Anniversary exercises, but it does not have any of the grand German chorals ; a few of these would be of service in the Tune and Hymn Book I am indicating.

It may be said that children cannot appreciate such hymns, and that the music is too difficult for them to learn ; but we must remember that their minds are singularly receptive, and what they learn in their early years is remembered. We desire to teach them the truths of God’s word, so that their minds may be settled in *the truth*, and to this end we use the best methods we can get, the clearest definitions of the Commentaries ; so we should teach them to sing these same truths in the best forms that can be had. I want to give the scholars each Sunday a hymn that will come back to them all through the week, the melody coming out unconsciously as they work or play, as it does so frequently with us, and in this way displacing the trashy songs they hear and learn in the streets. I hold that the best is not

too good to give them ; and, after thoroughly learning a good hymn, they appear to enjoy the singing of it as much as they do some of the easy marching tunes that they pick up after once hearing.

To specify the faults I find in the Westminster Hymnal : first, the indexing is not full enough ; second, there are not enough lesson hymns, distinctively ; and third, the selections for our special services, such as Christmas or Anniversaries, are not full enough. In this last respect it is like most of these books, as we all probably can testify.

If these views meet your approval, it is hoped a request to the Board of Publication may induce them to bring out a Hymn and Tune Book free from the defects indicated, and that shall for years supply all our wants of music for the Sunday-school.

A PAPER ON
“A SUITABLE HYMN AND TUNE BOOK FOR THE
SABBATH-SCHOOL.”

Read at the meeting of the Presbyterian Sabbath-school Superintendents' Association, Monday evening, January 16th, 1888,

BY WILLIAM H. SCOTT.

The President of the Association has asked me to open the discussion this evening upon the subject, “A Suitable Hymn and Tune Book for the Sabbath-school.” I listened with great interest to the remarks upon “Music and Music Books for Sabbath-schools” at our last meeting, and especially to the paper read by Brother Castle. Four years ago, just after the Westminster Hymnal was issued, we had this same subject for our tea-table talk, and I remember the prevailing sentiment of the meeting was, that the Westminster Hymnal was weak and not of a high standard. The meeting in November last convinced me that a change had come over the minds of many superintendents, and that Brother Castle's paper expressed the views of most of the members, that while the Westminster Hymnal has faults (and all hymn books have), it is a suitable hymn and tune book for the Sabbath-school after all.

This question cannot be discussed in a more practical way than by my answering the question, What influenced the Eastside Presbyterian Sabbath-school of Germantown, born on the first day of January this year, and of which I have the honor of being the

superintendent, to select, as the most suitable hymn and tune book for the Sabbath-school, the Westminster Hymnal?

While the tea-table talk at the November meeting and the paper of Brother Castle had their influence, the first reason I will give is, *its use in the Home School for four years*, the Market Square, and the Mt. Airy School for the same period. If the proof of the pudding is the eating of it, the proof of a hymn book is the using of it. The lamented Dr. Dulles, so long superintendent of this school (The Walnut Street, West Philadelphia), and one of the compilers of the Westminster Hymnal, wrote, in the introduction: "It aims to give as to both hymns and tunes: (1) What our young people can sing; (2) what they will sing; and (3) what they ought to sing." After four years' experience with the book I find that the young can and will sing the hymns and tunes found therein, and if the compilers committed any wrong in the matter of what ought to be sung, they are rather sins of omission than of commission. We adopted it, therefore, because it was a tried book.

A second reason influencing us in the choice of the Westminster Hymnal was, that *it compared favorably with other books* we examined. Not that we examined all, or even many, for Brother Castle says in his paper, "of the making of hymn and tune books there is no end." Personally, not being a musician, I sat in judgment on the hymns rather than on the tunes, except where the tunes were familiar to me, and I must say that "Songs of Worship for the Sunday-school," edited by Waldo S. Pratt and published by the Century Company only a few months ago, is a very superior book and better, in my judgment, than the Westminster Hymnal in two particulars: first, in its "get up," and by this I mean the composition, paper, press-work, and binding; and secondly, the first twenty-nine hymns in the book are "songs of the Lord's day," whereas the Hymnal has but three hymns bearing on the sacred day of rest. In comparing the two books, however, I found that some of the best hymns

were in both books, and that, while the Century Company's book has 265 numbers and the Westminster Hymnal 258, about one-quarter of the hymns are the same in both books. Admitting that they are both equally good, or that one is a little better than the other, we were led to the selection of the Westminster Hymnal,

Thirdly, *Because of loyalty to the Presbyterian Church and her publications.* The General Assembly saw the need of a Sabbath-school hymn book and recommended its preparation. Rev. Dr. Dulles and Mr. Seward undertook the work. Dr. Dulles, at least, knew what hymns ought to be used, and Mr. Seward, at least, knew to what tunes they ought to be sung. No doubt there are those in the church who think they could have done the work better, but I doubt if others had been appointed to compile the book it would have been any freer from faults than we now have it. We therefore adopted it because it was issued by the Presbyterian Board of Publication. I think the only way to meet entirely this question of suitable music in the Sabbath-school is the way in which we acted as regards our library. Loyalty to the Presbyterian Church and confidence in the Committee appointed by the Board to supervise its publications, led us to place in the library, nearly all of our own books, and now we are prepared to build on this solid foundation other publications—the gold and the silver, we trust, of Sabbath-school literature, and not the wood, the hay, and the stubble. Such, I think, is the way we can meet this question of music for the Sabbath-school. Now that we have the Westminster Hymnal, if on certain occasions we require other hymns not found in the book, it is easy to have these printed on slips for the use of the school, and thus supplement this valuable publication. In this way Brother Castle's third fault to the Westminster Hymnal,—that "the selections for our special services are not full enough,"—is partially removed. As to the first fault he finds,—"the indexing,"—let me suggest, until this is corrected, that each superintendent prepare an index of his

own, and in this way he will become as familiar with the hymns and their numbers as a bookkeeper indexing his ledger becomes familiar with the accounts, and can often turn to an account without reference to the index. As to Brother Castle's second fault,—“there are not enough lesson hymns, distinctively,”—while this is sometimes true, yet yesterday was an exception, for it would be hard to find three more appropriate hymns on the lesson of “Jesus Walking on the Sea,” than “‘Tis I, Be Not Afraid,” “Out Amid the Waves of Ocean.”

“Jesus, lover of my soul,
 Let me to thy bosom fly,
While the billows near me roll,
 While the tempest still is high.”

Often the fault is with the selections. Sometimes the most appropriate hymns are overlooked and the numbers not put on the lesson papers, and, again, the same hymn is given for two successive Sabbaths. I must say there is a change for the better, thus far, in this particular, in the Board's publications for this year. Now, while I believe in loyalty to the Presbyterian Church and her publications, I also believe the Board of Publication ought to be wide awake to the demands of the Church and Sabbath-school, and quickly make all improvements.

I consider that we now have a suitable hymn and tune book for the Sabbath-school; but, if about fifty hymns were added, and the index made more complete, we will have the very best book published.

"A SUITABLE HYMN AND TUNE BOOK FOR OUR SUNDAY-SCHOOLS."

Read at the meeting of the Presbyterian Sabbath-school Superintendents' Association, Monday evening, January 16th, 1888.

BY FRANCIS B. REEVES.

What is its name if it exists, and how can it be produced if not yet published? The Presbyterian Sunday-school Superintendents' Association rightly regards this question as of enough importance to carry it through two of their tea-table talks, possibly to bear fruit later on. It is an old, old question, settled many a time and revived again with the birth of each succeeding production. Hymn books come and hymn books go, but the call for another and a better rolls on forever.

I would suggest, first, that there may be a distinction between a "suitable" book and the *best* book for our Sunday-schools. Unhappily the highest standard of merit, whether as to hymns or tunes, is not precisely the standard which the schools themselves would regard as "suitable." Excellent books are in existence that are not popular because the compilers were not willing to go far enough in the compromise demanded of their personal judgment to meet the popular taste.

The Westminster Sunday-school Hymnal has been referred to most favorably by Brothers Castle and Scott, and is well worthy of

their kindly criticisms. Its selections are quite good enough as far as they go, but no book of 250 hymns can meet every demand made upon it. The book for which we are looking should contain more than double that number. The Board of Publication in its introduction confesses to the difficulty of "packing any more into the book without increasing its size and cost," but later achievements have shown us that the size may now be increased while the cost is reduced. The good conscience brought to bear by the late lamented Dr. Dulles and Mr. Seward in the compilation of the "Westminster" is conspicuous in the high tone of the hymns selected, and by their declaration in the preface that they "have aimed to give as to both hymns and tunes: 1st. What our young people can sing. 2d. What they will sing. 3d. What they *ought* to sing."

We may know what *ought* to be regarded as suitable hymns and tunes for our schools, but we may find not only that the popular verdict does not sustain our views, but that our own schools may require a spiritual awakening before they shall come to appreciate and love the very best of our selections. It is because it has been thought that the supply must be of a character adapted to meet the demand that the market is well nigh flooded with good Sunday-school hymn books upon which popular favor was lavishly bestowed for a very brief season. All have been launched, however, with the utmost confidence in their staying qualities upon the part of their publishers.

Twelve years ago the American Sunday School Union issued "Calvary Songs," edited by Rev. Dr. Charles S. Robinson and Theodore E. Perkins, in the preface to which I find their fond hope of long life thus expressed: "It is hoped that this book will be sufficient for the real use of any ordinary Sunday-school for at least twenty years; only let there be enterprise in learning to sing the pieces, so as to bring them all into service." It was better than the average book, but we found its chief editor issuing "Spiritual Songs for the Sunday-school," only five years afterwards, and now the American Sunday

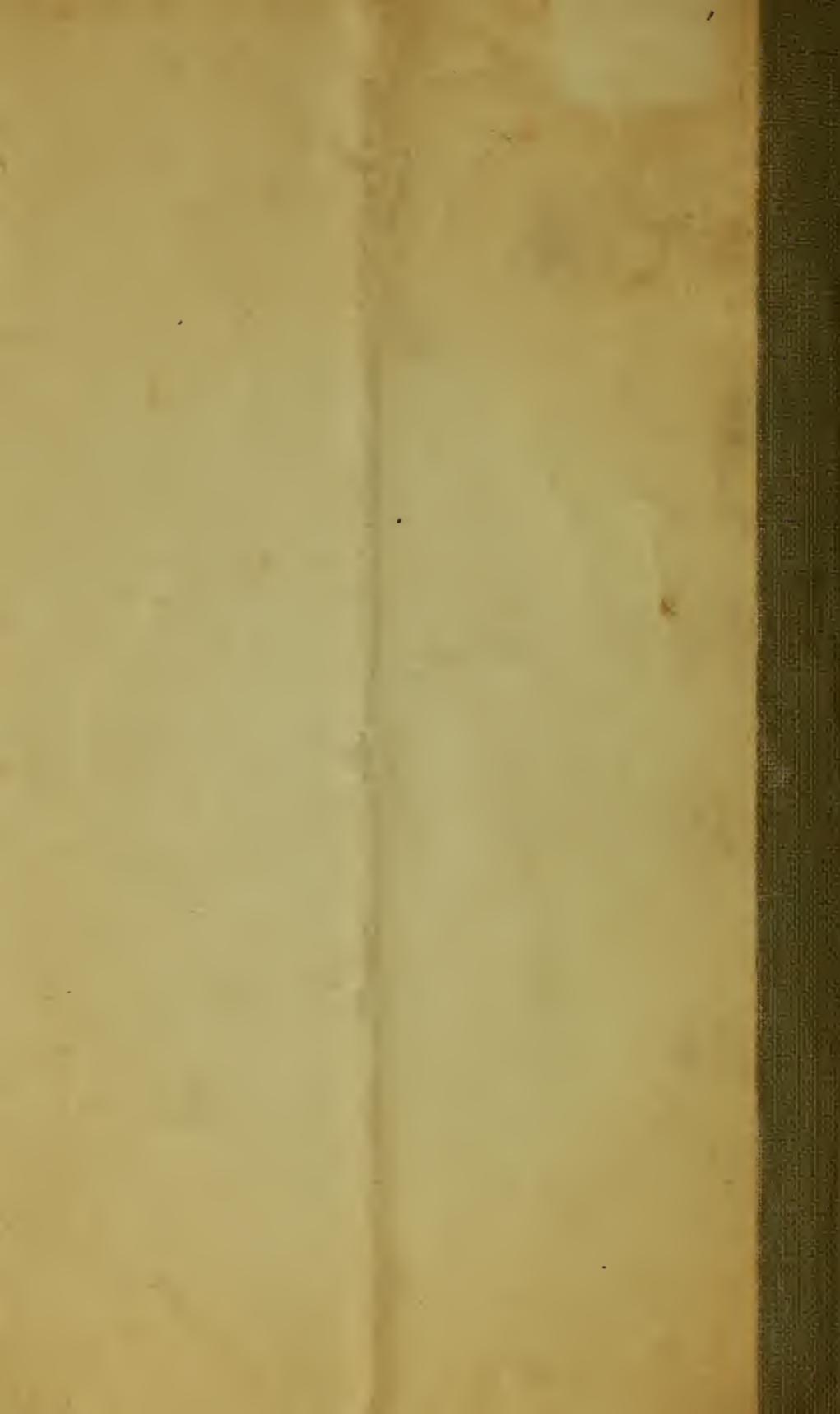
School Union is out with the new "People's Hymn and Tune Book." After five years' use of "Spiritual Songs for the Sunday-school" in Wakefield Sunday-school, I can testify to its admirable wearing qualities; nevertheless it is lacking in some important elements of a "suitable" book. We sometimes long for hymns not to be found in its list of 273 carefully chosen songs. "The People's Hymn and Tune Book," to which I have referred, may be commended for both quality and cheapness. Three hundred and fifty hymns, with music enough for all of them, in board covers, all for fifteen cents, marks a welcome reform in the line of reduced taxation for school and church expenses, a matter often standing in the way of making a needed change of hymn books. Concerning the merit of the compilation it may be said of it, as of the majority, it contains some hymns and tunes that we have no further use for, while some we wish for are among the missing. At the price of it, it will go upon a wide and a useful mission in and out of the Sunday-school.

The makers of a new and suitable book for our schools will probably recognize two great facts, and try to reconcile them. First, the Service of Song for the Sunday-school must be devotional, reverential, serious, solid. Second, the Service of Song for the Sunday-school must be light, bright, cheerful, "taking," so much so that the effect of the singing will be as Brother Castle desires, "to come back to the scholars all through the week, the melody coming out unconsciously as they work or play."

I would wish to see the bars all down, so that no copyright should deprive the makers of the next book from using everything good in everybody else's collection, but this, I suppose, is impossible. Then I would have a committee of musical Sunday-school workers to go at them, settle down upon about five hundred of the most suitable, and have the collection so put together that it could be furnished to Sunday-schools, in board covers, at twenty-five cents each by the hundred. It would contain the serious strains of William Cowper,

"O for a closer walk with God," and "God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform;" and the heart-warming songs of Charles Wesley, "Jesus lover of my soul" being named as an example only, and this we would have entire, just as it was composed. It would find places for Loplady's "Rock of Ages," Perronet's "All hail the power of Jesus' name," for Bishop Heber's "By cool Siloam's shady rill" and "Bread of the world in mercy broken," for Watts' "When I survey the wondrous cross," Anne Steele's "Father, whate'er of earthly bliss thy sovereign will desires," for Bishop Kerr's "Glory to thee my God this night," for Grigg's "Jesus and shall it ever be," and for that grand eighth century hymn of St. Stephen the Sabbaite, "Art thou weary, art thou languid?" and it will give place, too, for all the more modern hymns of the character of Lyte's precious inspiration, "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide," Charlotte Elliott's "Just as I am," Mrs. Adams' "Nearer my God to Thee," Muhlenberg's "Saviour who thy flock art feeding," Bonar's "I heard the voice of Jesus say," and Whittier's "We may not climb the heavenly steeps to bring the Lord Christ down." To all such as these they will add the spiritual verses of Bliss, Sweney, Hastings, Fannie Crosby, and Lydia Baxter. Enough have been written both of hymns and tunes. The best book will be the best collection from the gems already discovered, every one discarded that has not developed either spiritual power or musical excellence, none retained that are lacking in these essential elements of suitableness, however they may once have risen, mushroom-like, overloaded with tenderness of sentiment, into a fancied popularity in Sunday-school and Gospel meetings.

Such a book would find its way speedily to our social and prayer meetings and even into many of our churches, and thus serve as a helper in the search for the longed-for missing link between the Sunday-school and the church.



Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

