

public praise. The first attempts at English versification were extremely rude. English had the version of Sternhold and Hopkins, but it was little used except among the Puritans. In Scotland, while the influence of sacred song in spreading the new faith in private, and in quickening a deeper spiritual life was almost as remarkable as on the continent; the earliest Psalm versions were those included in "The Gude and Godlie Ballates" of the brothers Wedderburn. This was a poetical and devotional miscellany containing twenty-two psalms and ninety-five other pieces, of which thirty-four were translated from the German; two from the Latin, and the rest were original. It was first published about the middle of the sixteenth century.

The General Assembly of 1561 ordered the completion of the Psalter; the eighty-seven Psalms of the Anglo-Genevan version were taken as a basis and the rest were gathered from various sources. It was printed with the Book of Common Order, in Edinburgh, in 1564, and the Assembly of that year ordained that every minister, reader and exhorter should have a copy. It contained one hundred and eighteen tunes, chiefly from German and French sources. In the earlier editions, the air only was printed, but in 1635, Andro Hart published an edition with the tunes harmonized in four parts. This continued to be the Psalter of the Scottish Church for nearly a century.

One part of the work assigned to the Westminster Assembly was the preparation of a Psalter for both kingdoms, and the House of Commons recommended Rous's version to them. It was revised by the Assembly and was printed by the Commons in 1646.

The Assembly of the Scottish Church, however, appointed a committee to still further revise it, and finally published the result in 1650. Although still popularly called Rous's version, hardly a psalm remains as he left it. The committee incorporated a number of recasts of the former version and stanzas and couplets from many sources. For two centuries and a half it has resisted all attempts at revision, except in orthography. Its faithfulness, vigor and terseness have been universally admitted. It has become so endeared to the Scottish heart that all attempts to improve it, like the "emendations" of our own Book of Praise, are in many quarters resented.

#### Methodist Praise.

The revival of religion in England under the Wesleys and Whitefield was like a new Reformation, and carried with it the same inspiration to praise. Like every successful stirrer of Spiritual life, John Wesley perceived that congregational singing is at once a means of expressing the gratitude of souls freely forgiven; of instructing and

establishing the faith of disciples; of impressing those who are seeking light and of bringing them into a proper frame for receiving it.

He saw that the worship of his day had grown very weak here. He is very severe on "the formal drawl of the parish clerk, the screaming of boys who bawl out what they neither feel nor understand, and the unreasonable impertinence of a voluntary on the organ." He believed that the whole serious congregation, not lolling at ease, or in the indecent posture of sitting; but all standing before God ought to praise Him lustily and with good courage. His father, the rector of Epworth, and his elder brother Samuel, composed some good hymns which are still in use. He himself translated a number of fine hymns from Moravian and German mystic sources.

But his younger brother Charles was the real Asaph of the movement; he composed altogether some 6,500 hymns. It was largely through the inspiration of his cheering and soul-stirring strains that "the walls of Methodism were built to the sound of music." Armed with the Bible and the Hymn Book, the early evangelists of this faith went everywhere preaching the word. Her hymns have kept the distinctive doctrines of the Methodist Church alive; and the heartiness with which her praise has always been rendered has drawn all classes in the congregation closer together; it has been one of the chief elements of her strength, and has contributed not a little to her wonderful progress.

#### Present Day Praise.

During the last forty years all Protestant Churches have devoted much attention to their service of praise, and have certainly greatly increased the excellence of its technique. Congregations which once used the Psalter exclusively under the guidance of a humble precentor have now extensive hymn books, costly organs and well-trained professional singers to lead this part of the service. This artistic refinement, however, has not in all cases resulted in the highest form of worship. Too often there has been a mad race with the opera to furnish aesthetic entertainment to an audience supposed to have only a passive interest in praise. But there are many signs that congregations which have sounded all the depths and shallows of professional music are turning to seek a truer ideal. Wherever revivals of personal religion have deepened and strengthened the current of spiritual life, it has shown itself in hearty congregational singing. A wise arrangement of the praise service will encourage this by a judicious mingling of simplicity and culture; by affording a congregation opportunity for the expression of free, genial feeling as well as stately reverential devotion.