

length sanctioned the publication of a selection of hymns for public worship—not with the authority of the Church—but simply “by authority of the Committee of the General Assembly on Psalmody.” It is mainly owing to the zealous and persevering exertions of the Rev. Dr. Aitot, Convener of the Committee, that this stage has been at last reached. “Hymns” now stand in exactly the same position as the “Paraphrases.” The latter have never been formally authorised by the Church, but simply bear that they are “collected and prepared by a Committee of the General Assembly.” So far, then, as ecclesiastical sanction is concerned, there is now just the same authority for using the “Hymns” in public worship as the “Paraphrases.” We don’t suppose that the delay—we might almost say the reluctance—with which the Hymns have been so far sanctioned, has arisen from any conscientious scruple about the propriety of using “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” in the Church service, but rather from a repugnance to any innovation whatever, and from a dread lest some of these human productions might in any degree vary from the rigid orthodoxy of the Church of Scotland. Some feeling of this kind seems to have unduly hampered the compilers; for, while the selection contains many hymns of great beauty and excellence, some of them are more to be admired for their sound doctrine than for their poetic merits. This, however, will be amended in time. The collection of Paraphrases was not perfected at once, but underwent many additions, corrections, and excisions before it assumed its present shape. When the Hymns come generally into use, popular taste will point out what may be advantageously omitted or added. And as, after all, the use of hymns, rather than of the metrical psalms, is merely a matter of taste, we trust that no clergyman will seek to introduce them unless the congregation cordially concurs. It in any quarter there be a prejudice against them, it should be tenderly dealt with. The Paraphrases will doubtless retain their popularity, for, besides their own merits, they are interwoven with many early and pleasing associations in the minds of the Scotch people, but in due time the Hymns may be so too. They have been already introduced with much acceptance into several churches both in Edinburgh and throughout the country, and as they become better known their peculiar appropriateness to the different trains of devotional feeling, and to the varied circumstances of a congregation, will be fully appreciated. For instance, we should think that few collections will now be made for missionary purposes without being followed by Bishop Heber’s beautiful hymn, “From Greenland’s icy mountains.” Most of the hymns in this selection can be sung to the ordinary psalm tunes, and we understand that a music book is in preparation for the more unusual metres.

## The Rev. George Gilfillan on the Recent Catastrophe.

ON Sunday afternoon, in his own church in School Wynd, Dundee, the Rev. Mr. Gilfillan preached a sermon with special reference to the recent accident in Edinburgh. In the course of his sermon the Rev. gentleman said: An ancient house of vast size, and vaster height, is, with all its inmates, hushed in repose. Still and starry is the midnight sky; thousands of worlds are shining in the frosty firmament with dazzling splendour over the old Castle rock; Orion—the great Orion—is passing with slow and martial pomp, as if he were the sentinel of the ancient edifice; over the Calton Hill to the north there shines out in peaceful rivalry the Great Bear, or Plough with its seven large tremulous stars, resembling mighty tears—such tears as angels weep. Under the roof of the old tenement, aged men, middle-aged women, and tender babes have lain themselves down in perfect security. There are venerable sires—and grandsires too—there are careful matrons—there are blooming virgins—and there are infants “who cannot discern between their right hand and their left.” There the debauchee is sleeping off his debauch—there the pious man has newly ended his devotions—there the kind mother has just consigned her babes to rest, and has lain herself down beside them—there, among many other, is one expecting that the next morning shall be the morning of his birthday, and is reposing in glad expectation thereof. All is hushed in the unity of sleep, or in the fantastic variety of dreams. Suddenly, at the hour just past the midnight, when all that mighty heart of Edinburgh is lying still, there is heard a deep dull shock like the first gasp of an earthquake, followed by a sharp and rushing sound, as if it were the reverberation of innumerable waterfalls. Ah! that shock and that sound are the beginning of sorrows—they are the rehearsal of the cry. “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him!” Startled by the first sounds, the sleepers awake—some to feel themselves crushed to death—others to find themselves sinking down into a horrible gulf—others, half choked with dust and blinded by darkness, to hear on every side of them a terrible variety of woful sounds—the crashing of rafters, the sinking of floors, the wail of women, the cries of strong men, and the “still small voice” of weeping and of perishing infants. Oh, the horror which spreads at the appalling news through the darkened streets! Oh, the confusion in which thousands in the neighbourhood awake, as they hear of the tidings, and rush half-naked to rescue the victims, meeting others, who are almost wholly naked, leaping out to avoid their doom! Oh, the daring and desperate energy with which many leap among the ruins, and proceed immediately to dig for