

PREFACE TO THE HYMN-BOOK.

Church in all its services. The work was completed and published within the time specified by the General Conference, and was received with general favour, as well adapted for public worship, social services, and private devotion.

At the first General Conference of the Methodist Church, held in Belleville, in September, 1883, it was unanimously agreed "that 'The Methodist Hymn-Book' now used in the Methodist Church of Canada be adopted by all the congregations of the united Church, and that in view of such use, a suitable preface be supplied in future editions." The reasons that led to this decision were, doubtless, the admitted excellence of the book itself, and the fact that it was copyrighted, and already extensively used, by the largest of the uniting Churches.

The general scope and character of this book of praise are fitly indicated by the following paragraphs taken from the original preface :

"The influence of hymns of praise upon religious life has been felt and acknowledged in all ages, and in all branches of the Christian Church. From the beginning of the great religious awakening of the last century to the present time, the rich treasures of gospel truth and Christian experience, embodied in our noble Wesleyan hymns, have been among the most potent forces in the history of Methodism. These hymns have been a liturgy and a confession of faith; promoting the spirit of devotion and soundness in doctrine, among 'the people called Methodists.'

"The revision of the 'Collection,' so long used in every section of Wesleyan Methodism, was the most delicate and difficult part of the work. It was surrounded by many hallowed and cherished associations, having been for a century a source of consolation and strength to multitudes of God's people. The Committee, therefore, were unanimous in resolving to leave out no hymn which, by its adaptation to public worship, or private devotion, had vindicated a right to a place in the psalmody of the Church. But they felt that hymns which, after a trial of nearly a hundred years, had revealed little or no adaptation for use, might be safely omitted, to make place for others of greater practical value. Some long hymns have been divided, and others shortened to a moderate length, by omitting imperfect or inferior stanzas. In a few instances, where some solecism, or offensive confusion of figures, marred a