

The Book of Praise in the Sabbath School

By *Rev. A. Wylie Mahon, B.D.*

The man who said, that, if he could make the ballads of a nation, he cared not who made the laws, was not so big a fool as he is sometimes thought to have been. Most of us are deeply influenced by the songs we sing, the songs which we get hold of in childhood, and which keep hold of us all the rest of our days. The hymns which we love to learn, and learn to love, in the Sabbath School, exercise almost as much influence over us as the Bible lessons we study. How necessary then that the hymns should possess something of the inspiration of the inspired Word itself, that they should be simple and sweet and spiritual, like the gospel which Jesus lived and proclaimed.

If the hymns we sing in childhood are lacking in these beautiful graces, if they are poor in literary and spiritual qualities, we lose a grand opportunity of giving the children a helpful uplift into the kingdom of the beautiful and the good. Ralph Waldo Emerson called Edgar Allan Poe "the jingle man." This expression no doubt does injustice to one of the greatest literary geniuses of his age; but when this term is applied to many of the hymn writers of to-day, its appropriateness is all too plainly evident. The jingle men whose gospel ditties have been harnessed to catching airs, enjoy a little temporary popularity, but their work begins to die almost as soon as it begins to live.

We have in our Book of Praise a beautiful collection of hymns for children, "gems of purest ray serene," a great treasure to every heart which commits them to memory. In following out the General Assembly's interesting Supplemental Lessons, our little children have learned during the year Mrs. Alexander's, "There is a green hill far away." We have here a devotional exposition of the atonement, sweet and simple, which is worth more to our children than we often realize. It is indeed worth a good deal to many of us who are children of a larger growth. A venerable Doctor of Divinity tells, that, when he is questioned by theology-teachers as to his views on the

atonement, he always answers that he believes in Mrs. Alexander's theory:

"He died that we might be forgiven,

He died to make us good,

That we might go at last to Heaven

Saved by His precious blood."

At Easter time we sing and pray this hymn, and feel the sacred influence of the sweet, tender mystery of love associated with the "green hill" which is never very far away from any one of us.

At Christmas time we keep the words and music of Phillips Brooks', "O little town of Bethlehem" ringing in our heads and hearts. A child that gets these words lovingly homed in his heart will never wander very far from the right doctrine of the incarnation.

Mary Lundie Duncan's sweet little classic, "Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me," should be treasured up in the mind and heart of every child. I know one school, where every scholar, old and young,—we never grow too old to pray this prayer—was asked during the year to commit it to memory. There are few homes in that congregation to-day, where, at the children's hour, this beautiful prayer is not prayed.

The children's hymns of the Book of Praise may not all be so sweet and helpful as those I have mentioned, but many of them are of this class. We have a choice collection, set to music with a fine spiritual quality in it, which makes it easier for our Sabbath Schools to create a spiritual atmosphere in which to influence young lives for good.

St. Andrews, N.B.

What Can Young People's Societies Do For the Sabbath School?

By *Rev. John Neil, D.D.*

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The Young People's Societies can give to the Sabbath School what it so much needs—the sunshine, enthusiasm and tireless energy which characterize Young People's organizations.

They can do this, first, by the presence of their members in the Sabbath School.