

Literary Notices.

**Our Own Hymn-book.** A Collection of Psalms and Hymns for Public, Social, and Private Worship. Compiled by C. H. SPURGEON. Royal 32mo. London: Passmore and Alabaster. 1866.

It will scarcely be a source of surprise that Mr. Spurgeon should have compiled a hymn-book. To those who have considered the subject it is surprising that he did not do it long ago. When Dr. Rippon compiled his selection, an early edition of which we have before us, he could not have hoped for anything approaching the popularity which it would attain. Through many changes the copyright of the book still exists; and, owing to the extraordinary popularity of Mr. Spurgeon, Dr. Rippon's successor in the pastorate, the sale of that book has of late been like a resurrection from the dead. In New Park-street Chapel, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, and in most of the new churches which have sprung into existence from Pastor Spurgeon's College, the sale of Dr. Rippon's book has been very large, although the price has been high, and no attempt was made by the proprietor to make it cheaper. Complaints from the poor of the high price of the book have been loud and long, until at length, after much persuasion, Mr. Spurgeon resolved to prepare a new book more adapted to the wants and characteristics of the age in which we live. The task at first appeared so formidable that, after more than one attempt, it was laid aside to be again resumed; and when, during last year, considerable progress was believed to have been made, it was again allowed to rest, partly owing to the care and responsibility it involved, when other duties were pressing heavily on the pastor's attention. With the opening of the year 1866 the hymn-book was again taken in hand, this time with a purpose and resolve to allow no other duties to hinder its steady progress. Six months, we believe, were allotted to the task of its compilation; but it has required nearly eight to complete the book, with all the help which could be obtained from every available and reliable source. Very few persons would believe the amount of painstaking care, research, reading, writing, classifying, and correcting which the preparation of such a book has necessitated; but it is done, and by the kindness of the publishers we have an early copy before us. Some have tried to retard the progress of the work by hinting that it might not sell; but such persons have not considered the character of the man on whose judgment, courage, and resolution the work depended. The same spirit of opposition was manifested to the erection of the great Tabernacle, to the founding of the Pastors' College, and to other great reforms which Mr. Spurgeon has inaugurated: all which have proved the correctness of Mr. Spurgeon's plans and the soundness of his conclusions: all have been successful; Mr. Spurgeon himself is a great success; and so also will be "Our Own Hymn-book." We take it that its very title will make it attractive to many congregations, as any church in the land may adopt the book; and to all such it will be "our own." Not less than 7,000 persons enter the Metropolitan Tabernacle every week, taking all the services into account. By far the larger portion of that number will require a copy of the new book; and, besides, there are many strangers there every Sabbath-day who will for a long time to come require a copy, prompted partly by curiosity, and encouraged by the fact that the work has the various advantages of being more modern, more varied, more accurate, more comprehensive, more handy, and less costly than the old book, with the additional attraction to many of having so many original compositions of Mr. Spurgeon's in its pages. The preface is dated September, 1866. An extract will best state the compiler's object and design:—

"The range of our researches has been as wide as the bounds of existing religious literature, American and British, Protestant and Romish, ancient and modern. Whatever may be thought of our taste, we have used it without prejudice; and a good hymn has not been rejected because of the character of its author, or the heresies of the church in whose hymnal it first occurred; so long as the language and the spirit commended the hymn to our heart we included it, and believe that we have enriched our collection thereby. The range of subjects is very extensive, comprising not only direct praise, but doctrine, experience, and exhortation; thus enabling the saints according to Apostolical command to edify one another in their spiritual songs. If any object that some of the hymns are penitential or doctrinal, and therefore unfit to be sung, we reply that we find examples of such in the Book of Psalms, which we have made our model in compiling our work; there we have *Maschils* as well as *hosannahs*, and penitential odes as well as *hallelujahs*. We have been unable to fall in with modern scruples, but have rested content with ancient precedents. For the glory of the triune God of Israel we have joyfully laboured, and to that one object we dedicate the result of our toils, hoping that in some few churches of the land we may be helpful to their service of sacred song, and so aid them in praising the Lord.

"The features which distinguish this hymn-book are such as to justify its issue, at least in the mind of the compiler, upon whom it has involved immense labour—a labour which has been its own reward. Those features are as follows:—

- "1. The hymns have been drawn from the original works of the authors, and are given as far as practicable just as they were written. This is so unusual a practice as to be almost a novelty, while the mangling of hymns has grown into a system—a system, however, to be most heartily deprecated.
- "2. Subjects frequently passed over or pushed into a corner are here made conspicuously the themes of song; such, for instance, as the great doctrines of sovereign grace, the personal advent of our Lord, and especially the sweetness of present communion with Him.
- "3. Hymns suitable for revivals, prayer-meetings, and earnest addresses to sinners, are given in larger numbers and greater variety than in any other selection known to the editor.
- "4. The Psalms of David are here, by the aid of various writers, more especially Watts, the English and Scotch versions, Mr. Lyte, and Miss Auber, all presented, in whole or in part, in forms suitable for congregational

singing, and our endeavour has been to preserve the devout spirit of that inspired book even where the Jewish expressions have been necessarily changed for Christian language."

Mr. Spurgeon then acknowledges his obligations to Mr. Sedgwick, "without whose diligent assistance our work could never have been accomplished." He further records his thanks to very many proprietors of original hymns for permission to use their compositions, and concludes with this sentence: "We are thus indebted to all classes of Christians, and pray that all may derive a blessing from our labours." There are about 1,130 separate psalms or hymns, numbered consecutively from 1 to 1,059. Such of the psalms as make more than one piece retain the same number, with Part I., Part II., &c., added. Thus Psalm xlv., Version I., Scottish; Psalm xlv., Version II., Harriet Auber; Psalm xlv., Version III., Joseph Irons; Psalm xlv., Version IV., Benjamin Wallin and A. M. Toplady,—four different authors presenting either some different portion, or the same portion in a different light. The psalms which form the first part of the volume offer 220 separate compositions, although the consecutive numbers only reach 150. In this portion will be found a number of Mr. Spurgeon's own compositions; he does not aspire to the dignity and title of poet, but he has made some sensible paraphrases of the Psalms. These are numbered consecutively 15, 30, 39, 41, 53, 58, 60, 70, 82, 83, 111, 112, 120; there are six others amongst the hymns, which are numbered as follows—451, 897, 904, 934, 939, 974, and four graces of one stanza each, written by Mr. Spurgeon, besides a few others to which he has made additions, in order to fit them more fully for the special purpose for which they are designed. Mr. Sedgwick has, with indomitable courage, searched out the authorship of all but some sixteen pieces; the author's name and date of first publication, with names of translators when from foreign originals, are given throughout, and in this respect we have to acknowledge that this book is more accurate than any which has preceded it, as several mistakes have been corrected, and some new authorships discovered and appropriated now for the first time. A classified table of subjects and an index of first lines is given, and the book, strongly bound in cloth, may be had for two shillings and sixpence. Watts, Wesley, Doddridge, Newton, Cowper, Hart, and Irons, of the past, and nearly all the best hymn-writers of the present day, such as Lyte, Bonar, Kelly, Denny, Neale, Bathurst, Davis, Monsell, Caswall, Shipton, Edmeston, Newman Hall, and others, are represented. A larger and more comprehensive edition of the book is in preparation; we shall then have an opportunity of entering more fully into the critical composition of the work. At present we can honestly say, it is the largest, cheapest, and most accurate hymn-book in the English language, and we shall be surprised if one hundred thousand copies of it are not in circulation before this time twelve months.

**Essays for the Times on Ecclesiastical and Social Subjects.** By JAMES H. RIGG, D.D. 8vo, cloth. Pp. 532. London: E. Stock. 1866.

Dr. Rigg introduces this large volume to the reader with expressing his hope that it may assist in bringing Christian thinkers to an agreement on some of the pressing questions of the day. The essays are twelve in number, and their titles are as follows:—"The Relation of Wesleyan Methodism to the Established Church;" "The Vocation and Training of the Clergy;" "The Established Church—Defects and Remedies;" "The Puritan Ancestors and High-Church Parents of the Wesleys;" "Kingsley and Newman;" "Pusey's 'Eirenicon';" "Archbishop Manning and Dr. Pusey on the Working of the Holy Ghost among Separatists and Schismatics;" "The History of Heterodox Speculation;" "The Bible and Human Progress;" "Pauperism, Land Tenure, and the Clergy;" "The Origin, Causes, and Cure of Pauperism;" "Popular Education." It will be seen that the subjects include most of those which are recognised as of primary and pressing moment at the present time. The last two papers were published some ten years ago in the *London Quarterly Review*, but they will be found to be as pertinent to present controversies as if they had been written in the present year. To those who are acquainted with Dr. Rigg's views on these two questions,—namely, Education and Pauperism,—and who have watched the progress of legislation thereon during the past decade, will see how far the writer's views have been met by Parliament. Of the other papers some are now printed for the first time, and all are of recent date excepting the one on the Bible and Human Progress, which was delivered in 1858 as one of the Exeter Hall lectures. The scope of the entire volume indicates in its unity of purpose human progress, and they all recognise Christianity as furnishing the laws and the life out of which the progress of the world is continually to unfold itself. In the latter part of the preface Dr. Rigg observes that it is a matter of minor importance what relation the Methodist Church bears to other sections of the Church Catholic. We differ from him in this respect, and many readers of his volume will differ also. That is one of the prominent questions of the day, and the opinion of such a writer will, on that particular subject, be sure to be rigidly scrutinised. Many of our readers and many of the readers of Dr. Rigg's essays remember a series of pamphlets which appeared some sixteen years ago, known as "Papers on Wesleyan Matters." The authors of some of those papers are still living and in the ranks of the Wesleyan ministry. We have been contrasting the opinions therein expressed with those of Dr. Rigg

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