

When our blessed Lord comes the second time, without sin, unto salvation, to judge the world in righteousness and to gather his redeemed into his eternal kingdom of glory, then "the tabernacle of God will be with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. xxi. 3).

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### ARTICLE III.

#### EARLY NEW ENGLAND PSALMODY.

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WHEN the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth they brought with them, for the service of praise in their public worship, Mr. Henry Ainsworth's version of the Psalms. A well-preserved copy of this book (not of the earliest edition) belongs to the Prince Library, now in the keeping of the Boston Public Library. On a fly-leaf of the book is a brief entry by Rev. Thomas Prince himself, which reads as follows: "T. Prince, Plymouth, May 1, 1782. I have seen an edition of this version, in 1618. And this version of Ainsworth was sung in Plymouth Colony, and, I suppose, in the rest of N. E. till the New England version was printed."

Mr. Henry Ainsworth was the teacher in the English church at Amsterdam where he was associated in the ministry with Mr. Francis Johnson. It is not unlikely that the copy of Ainsworth's version which Mr. Prince saw (printed in 1618) was the earliest edition of the work.

Governor Bradford, in his Dialogue, written in 1648, between "some young men born in New England and sundry ancient men that came out of Holland and old England," has this pleasant descriptive passage touching Mr. Ainsworth:

"Mr. Henry Ainsworth, a man of a thousand, was teacher of this church at Amsterdam, at the same time when Mr. Johnson was pastor. Two worthy men they were, and of excellent parts. . . . He [Mr. Ainsworth] ever maintained good correspondence with Mr. Robinson at

Leyden, and would consult with him on all matters of weight, both in their differences and afterwards. A very learned man he was, and a close student, which much impaired his health. We have heard some, eminent in the knowledge of the tongues, of the university of Leyden, say that they thought he had not his better for the Hebrew tongue in the university, nor scarce in Europe. . . . He had an excellent gift of teaching and opening the Scriptures; and things did flow from him with that facility, plainness, and sweetness, as did much affect the hearers. He was powerful and profound in doctrine, although his voice was not strong, and had this excellency above many, that he was most ready and pregnant in the Scriptures, as if the book of God had been written in his heart; being as ready in his quotations, without tossing and turning his book, as if they had lain open before his eyes, and seldom missing a word in the citing of any place, teaching not only the word and doctrine of God, but in the words of God; and, for the most part, in a continued phrase and words of Scripture. He used great dexterity and was ready in comparing Scripture with Scripture, one with another."

Mr. Ainsworth died in 1622, two years after the Pilgrims reached Plymouth; and there was a grave suspicion, from the circumstances of his death, that he was taken off by poison. Walking in the streets of Amsterdam, he picked up a precious stone of great value, for which he sought and found the true owner, in the person of a Jew. The Jew offered to reward him generously for the restoration of the lost property. But the only reward which Mr. Ainsworth would accept was that the Jew should bring him face to face with the heads of the Jewish congregation in Amsterdam, in a free and open discussion upon the Scriptures. The Jew promised that this arrangement should be made. But he found the Rabbis unwilling to engage in such an encounter, and, by their refusal, the Jew was placed in an awkward position. In this crisis Mr. Ainsworth suddenly sickened and died — as was believed by poison, though the crime was never definitely traced.

For the purpose of general comparison we will, in this Article, give Ainsworth's version of the first Psalm, as also the same Psalm in several other versions, which were used by our fathers in the early New England days. This version we take from the copy, already referred to, in the Public Library. We are not able to say that it is precisely the

same as in the earliest edition of the work ; but probably it is the same, as we know of no one in those early years who ever undertook the special revision of Ainsworth's book.

- 1 O blessed man that doth not in  
the wicked's counsel walk ;  
Nor stand in sinners' way ; nor sit  
in seat of scornful folk.
- 2 But setteth in Jehovah's law  
his pleasurefull delight ;  
And in his law doth meditate  
by day and eke by night.
- 3 And he shall be like as a tree  
by water brooks planted,  
Which in his time shall give his fruit ;  
his leafe eke shall not fade ;  
And whatsoever he shall doe,  
it prosperously shall thrive.
- 4 Not so the wicked, but as chaffe  
which wind away doth drive.
- 5 Therefore the wicked shall not in  
the judgment stand upright,  
And in the assemblie of the just  
not any sinful wight.
- 6 For of the just, Jehovah he  
acknowledgeth the way ;  
And way of the ungracious  
shall utterly decay.

In the year 1669 Rev. John Cotton, son of the famous John Cotton of Boston, became pastor of the ancient church at Plymouth, and continued in the ministry there twenty-eight years (1669-1697). John Cotton, Esq., a grandson of this Plymouth pastor, in the year 1760, wrote a full and minute account of the Plymouth church, especially of that period when his grandfather was the pastor. This historical sketch may be found in the fourth volume of the Massachusetts Historical Collections, and from this we have a very clear idea of the early history of that church, in the matter now before us. The following extract from the article will be read with interest.

Vol. XXXVI. No. 142.

“ June 19, 1692, the pastor propounded to the church that, seeing many of the psalms in Mr. Ainsworth's translation, which had hitherto been sung in the congregation, had such difficult tunes that none in the church could set, they would consider of some expedient, that they might sing all the psalms. After some time of consideration, on August 7, following, the church voted that when the tunes were difficult in the translation then used, they would make use of the New England Psalm-book, long before received in the churches of the Massachusetts colony, not one brother opposing this conclusion. But finding it inconvenient to use two psalm-books, they at length, in June 1696, agreed wholly to lay aside Ainsworth, and with general consent introduced the other, which is used to this day (1760). And here it will be proper to observe that it was their practice from the beginning, till October, 1681, to sing the psalms without reading the line; but then, at the motion of a brother who otherwise could not join in the ordinance (I suppose because he could not read), they altered the custom, and reading was introduced; the elder performing that service, after the pastor had first expounded the psalm, which were usually sung in course; so that the people had the benefit of hearing the whole book of psalms explained.”

This is a very comprehensive paragraph; for it gives us, in brief, the history of the mother church at Plymouth, in respect to her singing customs, for the long period of one hundred and forty years. And, contrary to what would seem to be the general impression, it will be noticed that the custom of lining off the Psalms did not begin at Plymouth till more than sixty years from the settlement.

But we turn now from Plymouth to the Massachusetts Colony. Nine years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth the Puritans began to pour into the Massachusetts Bay. They were members of the church of England, though many of them were under censure for non-conformity. They brought with them, probably for their service of praise, in public worship, the version of the Psalms which they had used in England, Sternhold and Hopkins. The title-page of this book reads as follows: “ The whole Book of Psalms, by Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins, and others. Compared with the Hebrew, with apt notes to sing them withal. Set forth and allowed to be sung in all churches, of all people together, before and after Morning and Evening Prayer, also before and after Sermons; and, moreover, in private houses,

for their godly solace and comfort, laying apart all ungodly songs and ballades, which tend only to the nourishing of vice and corrupting of youth."

A writer in the *Christian Observer*<sup>1</sup> says: "Portions of the book of Psalms had been rendered into meter in the reign of Edward the sixth; but it was not until 1562 that the old version was completed and was published entire."

While we incline strongly to the belief that Sternhold and Hopkins' version of the Psalms was the one chiefly used at first in the churches of the Bay, it should be said that others think differently. In the brief quotation from Rev. Thomas Prince, as will be remembered, after saying that Ainsworth's version was used at Plymouth, he adds, "And I suppose in the rest of New England," etc. And George Hood, in his "History of Music in New England," in a note at the foot of page forty-eight, says: "There is almost a certainty that no other version than Ainsworth's was ever used in the colonies until the New England version was published. But if any one was used, in one or two of the churches, it was Sternhold and Hopkins." The writer, after an extensive research, has never so much as seen the most distant allusion to one, except in Felt's "History of Ipswich," which says that "Sternhold and Hopkins was used in the first church in that town." Another historical reference, quoted by Hood shows quite plainly that Ainsworth was used at Salem.

It must be admitted that there is a great lack of documentary evidence showing exactly what book was generally used in the early churches of the Bay. But the student of New England history will remember, in the matter of the Salem church, the oldest in the Bay, that it had a peculiar and providential connection, in its origin, with the church at Plymouth. This may account for the fact that Salem had Ainsworth's version, even though the churches in the Bay, formed afterwards, did not.

Our chief reason for thinking they did not lies in the nature of the case. The Puritans of the Bay came out of

<sup>1</sup> January, 1818, p. 155.

churches in England that were using Sternhold and Hopkins. The Pilgrims had a very different historical starting-point. The Puritan settlers about Boston would have been likely to bring the books with them that they had been using in England, and use them here in the first years.

There is another simple fact which may or may not be important in the settlement of the point now before us. The Congregational Library in Boston has two copies of Sternhold and Hopkins ; one printed in London in 1634, and the other in 1636. The first one probably came over in the family of John Putnam, who reached these shores in 1634, the very year in which this book was published ; the other belonged to that ubiquitous character, known as " Johannes Smith." It was in its day an elegant book, and still bears the traces of its early beauty. Now when we remember that it is almost impossible to procure a copy of the Bay Psalm Book, printed on these shores in 1640, and in use for ten years in the early churches, the fact that these two copies of a work, printed earlier and printed in England, have drifted into one library, after this long lapse of years, would seem to imply that there must once have been a good many copies of the same book on these shores. We believe that it was generally used in the early churches of the Massachusetts Bay.

One fact more. Hood, from whom we have already quoted, says : " In 1693 an edition of Sternhold and Hopkins' version was published at Cambridge, and was used to some extent in the churches." It does not seem likely that an edition would have been brought out at that time unless the work had struck some roots before in the New England soil.

The movement which brought this version of Sternhold and Hopkins into use in the English churches seems to have originated with Thomas Sternhold himself, and that too without any forecast as to the use to which his work would be put. He was Master or Groom of the Robes, as the office is called, at the court of Henry VIII., and afterward of Edward VI. He was a man of religious principle, in a corrupt court, and was so impressed with the evil influence of

the low and half-indecent songs and ballads which were sung among the courtiers that he versified the first fifty Psalms, and fixed tunes to them, that they might, if possible, take the place of the trashy roundelays then so current. These were soon taken into some of the parish churches, and the practice of using them in public worship, once started, grew till it became general. Hopkins and others took up and completed the work, so that they had at length "The Whole Book of Psalms." At the time when the Puritans settled Massachusetts Bay this book was in common use in the English churches, and it was almost a matter of course that the Puritan fathers should bring the book with them to their new home. It was soon cast aside, however, on these shores, for reasons, probably, that do not now seem very reasonable.

Our fathers were so intent upon getting rid of everything pertaining to the Church of England that they parted with not a few good things, and put inferior things in their place. The version of Sternhold and Hopkins was quite as true, for aught we see, though not so servilely conformed to the original, as anything that followed; and was certainly far more easy and rhythmical in its flow than that with which our fathers contented themselves for long years afterwards. The following is Thomas Sternhold's version of the first Psalm.

- 1 That man is blest that hath not bent  
to wicked read<sup>1</sup> his care;  
Nor led his life as sinners do,  
nor sate in scorner's chaire.
- 2 But in the law of God the Lord  
doth set his whole delight;  
And in that law doth exercise  
himselſe both day and night.
- 3 He shall be like the tree that growes  
fast by the river side,  
Which bringeth forth most pleasant fruit,  
in her due time and tide;  
Whose leafe shall never fade nor fall,  
but flourish still and stand;  
Even so all things shall prosper well  
that this man takes in hand.

<sup>1</sup> *Read* is the *rede* of Shakespeare and Burns — advice, counsel.

- 4 So shall not the ungodly men,  
they shall be nothing so;  
But as the dust which from the earth  
the wind drives to and fro.
- 5 Therefore shall not the wicked men  
in judgment stand upright;  
Nor yet the sinners with the just  
shall come in place or sight.
- 6 For why? The way of godly men  
unto the Lord is known;  
And eke the way of wicked men  
shall quite be over thrown.

It will probably be admitted that the version just given is superior for singing purposes to that which we shall presently take from the Bay Psalm Book. Yet we do not catch in this first Psalm any of those genuine poetic outbursts that we find in some of the other Psalms versified by Sternhold. A passage from the eighteenth Psalm, quite familiar to the old people of New England, will illustrate our meaning.

The Lord descended from above  
and bowed the heavens high;  
And underneath his feet he cast  
the darkness of the sky.  
On cherubs and on cherubims  
full royally he rode;  
And on the wings of all the winds  
came flying all abroad.

This is the exact shape in which the words stand in the old version. There is a poetic fervor in the lines which is quite contagious. Our fathers long ago felt the grand sweep and stir of these stanzas, when they named the tune which they linked to them, Majesty. But they took the liberty to change the second line by adding the word "most"; so that it should read, "and bowed the heavens most high." But Sternhold made the word "heavens" do service as two syllables, and the line as he left it is more energetic than with the change. But they improved the last two lines by avoiding the repetition of the word "all." In our New England use they read:

"And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad."



But the New England Puritans had been only a very few years here in the Bay when they thought they must have another version of the Psalms, and so in 1639 Mr. Richard Mather of Dorchester, Mr. John Eliot, and Mr. Thomas Welde, associate ministers at Roxbury, were designated as fit persons to take this business in charge, and in 1640 they produced what is now known as the Bay Psalm Book. It does not bear that name on the title-page. There it is called simply, "The Whole Book of Psalms, faithfully translated in English Meter." The Bay Psalm Book was a mode of designation early given, probably to distinguish it from Ainsworth's version, in use in the Plymouth colony.

Mr. Richard Mather, who was probably regarded as the leading member on this committee, did more of the public writing for the churches, in the early years of the Massachusetts Colony, than any other man. And when he was called to write prose he always acquitted himself with great credit. No man, probably, in the first New England generation, shaped so many ecclesiastical papers, for synods, for councils, and for the use of individual churches, as he. John Eliot, too, was a notable minister, and has left behind him an undying name. Thomas Welde was a man of good learning and recognized ability. But their fitness for this peculiar work does not appear to have been eminent. They completed their task in 1640, and the book was printed the same year, enjoying the honor of being the first book printed in America. When some antiquarian, at the present day, pays ten or twelve hundred dollars for a copy of the Bay Psalm Book, it is entirely safe to conclude that the poetry is not what he is after. We give the version, in this book, of the first Psalm.

1. O blessed man, that in th' advice  
    of wicked doeth not walk ;  
nor stand in sinner's way, nor sit  
    in chayre of scornfull folk.
- 2 But in the law of Iehovah  
    is his longing delight ;  
and in his law doth meditate  
    by day and eke by night.

- 3 And he shall be like to a tree  
 planted by water-rivers;  
 that in his season yields his fruit,  
 and his leafe never withers.
- 4 And all he doth shall prosper well.  
 the wicked are not so:  
 but they are like unto the chaffe,  
 which winde drives to and fro.
- 5 Therefore shall not ungodly men  
 rise to stand in the doome;  
 nor shall the sinners with the just  
 in their assemblie come.
- 6 For of the righteous men the Lord  
 acknowledgeth the way;  
 but the way of ungodly men  
 shall utterly decay.

It is quite evident that the versification here is not an improvement upon that of Sternhold and Hopkins. There were no such rhymes in that as *walk* and *folk*, *rivers* and *withers*. No such constrained reading was demanded as is required to make out properly the first and second lines in the second stanza. We are not called to hunt after the subject of a verb, as in the third line of the second stanza. Minor faults might be pointed out, as for example, the force that must be thrown upon the little word "the," in the third line of the last stanza, in order to fill out the rhythm.

When the transition was made from the old book to the new there was evidently enough of taste and sense in those primitive congregations to feel that a step backward had been taken. Mr. Thomas Shepard, minister at Cambridge, attempted to give expression to this feeling of dissatisfaction, in rhymes and measures, which show us, at least, that he was as poorly fitted to be entrusted with such work as the men whom he criticised. Two of the men who helped to make the Bay Psalm Book lived, it will be remembered, at Roxbury and one at Dorchester. Hence the machinery of Mr. Shepard's lines that follow:

"Ye Roxbury poets, keep clear of the crime  
 Of missing to give us very good rhyme;  
 And you of Dorchester, your verses lengthen,  
 But with the texts own words you will them strengthen."

The anxiety expressed by Mr. Shepard, that they should strengthen their lines by using "the text's own words," was one of the difficulties that all the old versifiers encountered. There was such a public demand that the writers should keep close to the exact words of the Scripture as greatly to impede their rhythmical efforts. But it is certainly possible to keep as closely to the original as they did and yet write in numbers not inharmonious. Take the first Psalm as versified at a later period, by one who sought to keep as near to the Scripture language as did these earlier writers, and who found a way of doing so without sacrificing measure and rhyme in the attempt.

- 1 Blest is the man who walketh not  
Where men of evil counsels meet;  
Who stands not in the sinner's way,  
Nor sitteth in the scorner's seat.
- 2 But in Jehovah's perfect law  
He ever findeth his delight,  
Thereon he meditates by day,  
And meditates thereon by night.
- 3 He shall be like some goodly tree,  
Planted where streams of water flow;  
Which bringeth forth its timely fruit;  
Whose leaf no withering heat shall know.
- 4 His toil prosperity attends;  
While the ungodly toil in vain;  
Their work is like the fleeting chaff,  
Which the wind driveth o'er the plain.
- 5 So the ungodly shall not stand  
When judgment comes to prove their way;  
In the assembly of the just,  
The foolish sinner may not stay.
- 6 The Lord keeps watch about the path,  
And knows the way the righteous go;  
But the ungodly man shall fail,  
His way shall perish here below.

As a still more convincing evidence that the early Massachusetts churches were not satisfied with the Bay Psalm Book we have the fact that, in less than ten years after its

first publication, the work was given into the hands of Rev. Henry Dunster, President of Harvard College, for revision. Associated with him in this work was Mr. Richard Lyon, a younger man, who had recently come over from England, and was at that time living in President Dunster's family, and acting as private tutor to an English student then resident at Harvard College. President Dunster was known and recognized as "a great master of the Oriental languages," and this was one important qualification fitting him for the work. These two men took the book in hand, and certainly made a great improvement in it; though the work, as left by them, would be far from satisfying the aesthetic demands of our own generation. The following is their version of the first Psalm :

- 1 O blessed man, that walks not in  
th' advice of evil men ;  
Nor standeth in the sinner's way,  
nor scorner's seat sits in.
- 2 But he upon Jehovah's law  
doth set his whole delight ;  
And in his law doth meditate,  
both in the day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a planted tree  
by water-brooks, which shall  
In his due season yield his fruit ;  
whose leaf shall never fall ;
- 4 And all he doth shall prosper well  
the wicked are not so :  
But they are like unto the chaff,  
which wind drives to and fro.
- 5 Therefore shall not ungodly men  
in judgment stand upright ;  
Nor in the assembly of the just  
shall stand the wicked wight.
- 6 For of the righteous man, the Lord  
acknowledgeth the way,  
Whereas the way of wicked men  
shall utterly decay.

That was as well as Harvard College could do in that day and generation (1650). On the whole it was a decided im-

provement upon the work of Mr. Mather and his associates ; though there is nothing in the earlier version worse, for a rhyme, than *skall* and *fall*, in the third stanza ; and besides the imperfection of the rhyme the whole expression in that sentence is awkward and constrained. There was no material change in the title-page. It was the old book revised and improved. But the name by which it came at length to be more generally known was the New England Psalm Book. In this shape it passed into general use among the churches of the Bay, as also in the churches of Connecticut, and, as we have seen, it took the place of Ainsworth's version at Plymouth in 1696. By the year 1722 the twentieth edition was published on these shores. In 1744 the twenty-sixth edition was issued. But this book also had a European history and reputation. It went quite extensively into the dissenting churches of England and Scotland. Before its career was ended the editions of it, in this country, in England and in Scotland, are reckoned to have been as many as seventy.

It will be well for us to keep in mind, also, what was going on, in the way of making Psalm-books, in England in this same period. Three years after the publication of the Bay Psalm Book at Cambridge, the House of Commons in England recommended to the Westminster Assembly of Divines, then in session, that they adopt for use in the churches Francis Rouse's version of the Psalms. It will be remembered that the controlling power in this House of Commons was in the hands of men kindred to our Puritan ancestors, though of a Presbyterian tendency. Complaint was made that the version of Sternhold and Hopkins was becoming obsolete. But the real motive which led to the adoption of Rouse's version in England was essentially the same, probably, which originated the Bay Psalm Book on these shores, viz. to throw off all affinities with the church of England. Rouse's version came into special use in the Presbyterian churches, both of the Old World and the New, while the version of Sternhold and Hopkins held on its way for a long time afterwards in the parochial churches of

England. In Allibone's Dictionary of Authors, the writer of the Article on Francis Rouse says: "Rouse's version is still (1869) pertinaciously adhered to by some congregations."

Fifty years later, in England, came in the version of Tate and Brady. The first edition of it seems to have been published in 1695. Like our Bay Psalm Book, it was a reform backwards on Sternhold and Hopkins. But it caught the ears of the multitude very easily, and had a large run in England long before it reached our shores. Our fathers would at first be slow to touch it, because of its affiliations with the national church. It began to come into this country in the last half of the last century, when the old ecclesiastical prejudices had in some good degree died out. An edition of Tate and Brady was published in Boston in 1755, another in 1762, a third in 1793, and a fourth in 1807, and very likely others. An edition was published by Isaiah Thomas, in Worcester, in 1788. Nahum Tate was a native of Dublin; but he removed to London, and was regarded as a poet of considerable genius. At least, he became poet laureate at the English court. Dr. Nicholas Brady, associated with him in preparing this version of the Psalms, was a divine of some eminence and chaplain in ordinary. The following is the version by Tate and Brady of the first Psalm:

- 1 How blest is he, who ne'er consents  
by ill Advice to walk;  
Nor stands in sinner's ways, nor sits  
where Men profanely talk:
- 2 But makes the perfect Law of God  
his Business and delight,  
Devoutly reads therein by Day,  
and meditates by Night.
- 3 Like some fair Tree, which fed by Streams,  
with timely Fruit does bend,  
He still shall flourish, and success  
all his designs attend.
- 4 Ungodly Men and their Attempts  
no lasting Root shall find;  
Untimely blasted and dispers'd  
like Chaff before the Wind.

- 5 Their Guilt shall strike the Wicked dumb  
before the Judge's Face :  
No formal Hypocrites shall then  
among the Saints have Place.
- 6 For God approves the just Man's Ways ;  
to Happiness they tend ;  
But Sinners and the Paths they tread  
shall both in Ruin end.

In this we see a very marked change from the versions before copied. There is far more freedom and *abandon* in the flow of the lines. The writers do not feel themselves so closely confined to the words of the original. But of all versions none have been more severely criticised than this. Dr. James Beattie says of it : " Tate and Brady are too quaint ; and when the Psalmist rises to sublimity (which is very often the case), are apt to sink into bombast ; yet Tate and Brady have many good passages, especially in those Psalms that contain simple enunciations of moral truth." Nahum Tate was made poet laureate (1690) in the reign of William and Mary, and was successor to Thomas Shadwell. Robert Southey, who was poet laureate also, in his turn, at a later age, says : " Nahum Tate, of all my predecessors, must have ranked the lowest of the laureates, if he had not succeeded Shadwell." Charles Knight says of him : " Nahum Tate has succeeded to an extent that defies all competition in degrading the Psalms of David and the Lear of Shakespeare to the condition of being tolerated, and even admired, by the most dull, gross, anti-poetical capacity." The above passages are quoted from Allibone's Dictionary of Authors.

Perhaps we cannot better illustrate exactly what these writers mean than by taking the same passage in the eighteenth Psalm, already quoted as versified by Sternhold, and see how Tate puts it.

He left the beauteous realms of light,  
Whilst Heaven bowed down its awful head,  
Beneath his feet, substantial night  
Was, like a sable carpet, spread :  
The chariot of the King of Kings,  
Which active troops of angels drew,  
On a strong tempest's rapid wings  
With most amazing swiftness flew.

This is Tate's feeble and sensuous versification of those lofty words: "He bowed the heavens, also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." The passage is ornamented to death.

In the year 1765 another version of the Psalms of David was published in England from the pen of James Merrick, which obtained some currency there; but we are not aware that it ever found adoption in this country, certainly not to any great extent. William Orme, in his *Bibliotheca Biblica*, says of it: "Merrick's version of the Psalms is undoubtedly the most poetical translation of these sacred poems in the English language. It is too poetical for ordinary public worship; but it is highly gratifying for private use to persons of cultivated taste."

But to return again to our own country: The New England Psalm Book held on its way, in the same essential shape in which it was left by President Dunster from 1650 until 1758. In the last-named year Rev. Thomas Prince, pastor of the Old South Church, Boston, brought out his improved edition of the book, he being then seventy-one years old, and his death occurring in the same year with this publication. He had been at work in his leisure hours for two years upon this revision. In this connection, it will be interesting if we copy at some considerable length certain passages from the preface of Mr. Prince, which will bring this whole history vividly before us, though they will repeat certain things already said. We will give the passages in the exact style in which Mr. Prince left them.

"By 1636 there were come over hither near *thirty* pious and learned *Ministers*, educated in the *Universities* of ENGLAND: and from the same exalted Principle of *Scripture Purity in Religious Worship*, they set themselves to translate the *Psalms* and other *Scripture Songs* in *English Metre*, as near as possible to the *inspir'd Original*. They committed this Work especially to the Rev. Mr. *Richard Mather* of *Dorchester*; the Rev. Mr. *Thomas Weld* and the Rev. Mr. *John Eliot* of *Roxbury*; well acquainted with *Hebrew*, in which the *Old Testament*, and with the *Greek* in which the *New* were *originally* written. They finished the *Psalms* in 1640;



which were first printed by Mr. Day, that Year, at our *Cambridge*; and had the Honour of being the *First Book Printed in NORTH AMERICA*, and as far as I find, in *This whole NEW WORLD*. . . . But for a further Improvement, it was committed to the Rev. Mr. *Henry Dunster*, President of *Harvard College*, one of the greatest Masters of the oriental languages that has been known in these Ends of the Earth; who was helped as to the *Poetry* by Mr. *Richard Lyon*, an ingenious Gentleman probably brought up at one of the Universities in *England*, sent over by Sir *Henry Mildmay* as a Tutor to his Son at *Harvard College*, and resided at Mr. *Dunster's House*. . . .

"In two or three Years they seem to have completed it, with the Addition of the other *Songs in Scripture*: And they not only had the Happiness of approaching nearer to the inspired original than all other Versions in *English Rhyme*, but in many Places of excelling them in Simplicity of Style, and in affecting Terms, being the Words of GOD which more strongly touch the Soul. On which account, I found in *England*, it was by some eminent Congregations prefer'd to all Others in their *Publick Worship*, even down to 1717, when I last left that Part of the *British Kingdom*.

"It seems a thousand Pities then, that such a *Version*, which has more of *Inspiration*, and therefore of Divine Authority and Influence on the Heart than others, should, on account of the Flatnesses in diverse Places, be wholly laid aside, and not rather mended and preserved in our Churches: as has been earnestly desired by many of refined Taste and Judgment. . . .

"Having begun this Work on *April 29, 1755*, and being encouraged to proceed by the *Respectable Brethren* of the *Congregation* I belong to, I desire to Praise the MOST HIGH for carrying me on thro' Multitudes of Avocations, Interruptions and Infirmities to the *End* of the *Psalms* by the *Last of August 1756*, and to the *End* of the *other Scripture-Songs* by the *20th of March 1757*. And to His Glory and Blessing, and the Edification of his people I humbly resign it."

This preface bears date *May 26, 1758*, and Mr. Prince died the *October* following—a notable man, who has left his name sacredly connected with many most important interests. This version of his is a great improvement, without doubt, upon those that went before; but still it is not so great an improvement as might naturally enough have been expected from one so learned and accomplished as *Thomas Prince* was. The poetic ease and grace are still wanting. The lines have not lost all their old awkward constraint, even under his touch. The following is his version of the first Psalm:

- 1 O blessed man, who walks not in  
the counsels of ill men,  
Nor stands within the sinner's way,  
nor scoffer's seat sits in.
- 2 But on Jehovah's written law  
he places his delight :  
And in his law he meditates  
with pleasure day and night.
- 3 For he is like a goodly tree  
to rivers planted near ;  
Which timely yields its fruit, whose leaf  
shall ever green appear ;
- 4 And all he does shall prosper still,  
Th' ungodly are not so ;  
But like the chaff, which, by the wind,  
is driven to and fro.
- 5 Therefore in judgment shall not stand  
such as ungodly are ;  
Nor in th' assembly of the just  
shall sinful men appear :
- 6 Because the way of righteous men  
the LORD approves and knows,  
Whereas the way of evil men  
to sure destruction goes.

Long years before Mr. Prince had fixed upon this as the best version he could make of the first Psalm, Isaac Watts had published his version of the Psalms (1719), and had shown how easily and gracefully the work could be done by a man having the true poetic gift. Mr. Watts, after a life of seventy-two years, had been in his grave ten years before Prince's edition of the New England Psalm Book was published. In contrast with much that has gone before, let us notice with what a facile pen Watts turns off his lines. He is not, of course, so strictly bound by the original, but he catches the whole purpose of the sacred writer as truly, perhaps, as any of the others. The following is his version of the first Psalm :

- 1 Blest is the man that shuns the place  
Where sinners love to meet ;  
Who fears to tread their wicked ways,  
And hates the scoffer's seat :

- 2 Who in the statutes of the Lord  
Has placed his chief delight ;  
By day he reads or hears the word,  
And meditates by night.
- 3 He, like a plant of gen'rous kind  
By living waters set,  
Safe from the storms and blasting wind,  
Enjoys a peaceful state.
- 4 Green as a leaf, and ever fair  
Shall his profession shine ;  
While fruits of holiness appear  
Like clusters on the vine.
- 5 Not so the impious and unjust ;  
What vain designs they form !  
Their hopes are blown away like dust,  
Or chaff before the storm.
- 6 Sinners in judgment shall not stand  
Amongst the sons of grace  
When Christ the Judge at his right hand  
Appoints the saints a place.
- 7 His eye beholds the path they tread,  
His heart approves it well ;  
But crooked ways of sinners lead  
Down to the gates of hell.

Our Scotch brethren, as is well known, have been great sticklers for the ancient ideas on the subject of singing in public worship. They have adhered more pertinaciously than others to the antique and literal versions of the Psalms, and have given far less favor to general hymns of praise, such as are now common in almost all our American churches. Indeed, our later books discard the distinction which prevailed among us until recently of keeping the Psalms and Hymns separate. They are now blended together, and assigned to their places according to their topics. But the Scotch are more conservative. They do not, it is true, in singing confine themselves strictly to the Psalms, as they once did ; they have versions of many other passages of Scripture. One of the most beautiful of these paraphrases, outside of the Psalms, is that of the whole of the thirteenth

chapter of First Corinthians: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels," etc. They hold to singing passages from holy writ, kept as near as may be to the actual words and precise thoughts of the Scriptures. Their long continuance in this habit has made them greater adepts in this style of versification. But the best examples of this style will not be found in the Psalms of David. That part of the work was earliest done, and they are careful not to depart very far from Rouse's version and the ways of their fathers. Take the passage above referred to (1 Cor. 13) as it is found in the Scotch Psalm-Book, and one cannot read it without such a sense of grace and beauty in the rendering that he wishes to have nothing changed. And even in the Psalms as now sung, though the rendering is more antique, the style is far in advance of some of the specimens that have come before us in the previous pages of this Article. We copy from a volume published in 1858, "approved by the General Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland." This is the rendering of the first Psalm:

- 1 That man hath perfect blessedness  
Who walketh not astray  
In counsel of ungodly men;  
Nor stands in sinners' way;
- 2 Nor sitteth in the scorner's chair:  
But placeth his delight  
Upon God's law, and meditates  
On his law, day and night.
- 3 He shall be like a tree that grows  
near planted by a river,  
Which in his season yields his fruit,  
and his leaf fadeth never:
- 4 And all he doth shall prosper well.  
The wicked are not so,  
But like they are unto the chaff  
which wind drives to and fro.
- 5 In judgment therefore shall not stand  
Such as ungodly are;  
Nor in th' assembly of the just  
Shall wicked men appear.

6 For why ? the way of godly men  
 Unto the Lord is known :  
 Whereas the way of wicked men  
 Shall quite be overthrown.

In striking contrast to this, which is good, according to old standards, let us take a few stanzas from the version, already referred to, of the thirteenth of First Corinthians. Here we shall see how a later and graceful hand has been able to turn Scripture into most pleasing and harmonious verse, while still keeping close enough to the words of the text for all practical uses.

Though perfect eloquence adorn'd  
 my sweet, persuading tongue,  
 Though I could speak in higher strains  
 than ever angels sung :  
 Though prophecy my soul inspir'd  
 and made all myst'ries plain :  
 Yet, were I void of Christian love,  
 those gifts were all in vain.

Love still shall hold an endless reign  
 in earth and heav'n above,  
 When tongues shall cease, and prophets fail,  
 and every gift but love.  
 Here all our gifts imperfect are ;  
 but better days draw nigh,  
 When perfect light shall pour its rays,  
 and all those shadows fly.

Faith, Hope, and Love now dwell on earth,  
 and earth by them is blest ;  
 But Faith and Hope must yield to Love,  
 of all the graces best.  
 Hope shall to full fruition rise,  
 and Faith be sight above ;  
 These are the means, but this the end,  
 for saints forever love.

These are but *three* of the *seven* double stanzas required to cover the whole chapter, all equally easy and flowing.

About the middle of the last century Watts's Psalms and Hymns began to find their way into the churches of this

country, and to displace, by degrees, the New England Psalm Book, which had been for a long course of years, in its various versions, in almost universal use throughout New England. It is said that the first edition of Watts was published in Philadelphia, in 1741. But it was not till some time after that it came into common use in New England. Toward the close of the last century most of the churches, probably, had taken it. But Prince's revision of the New England Psalm Book had a good run after its issue in 1758.

We have not enumerated all the Psalm-books known in New England during the one hundred and fifty years of her earlier history ; but we have kept ourselves to such as gained any considerable currency. Rev. John Barnard, a prominent minister at Marblehead (1716-1770), made a version of the Psalms, of which the following is the first stanza of the first Psalm :

Thrice blest the man, who ne'er thinks fit  
To walk as wicked men advise ;  
To stand in sinner's Way, nor sit  
With those who God, and man, despise.

Cotton Mather, too, with the peculiar bent that marked his multitudinous literary enterprises, must needs try his hand at this business ; and his work would have been out of character if he had not given it a substantial Latin, Greek, or Hebrew name, and so he called it "Psalterium Americanum." It was in blank verse, as he did not wish to be hampered by rhyme in his efforts to keep very close to the original. His work is a literary curiosity ; but it did not gain any special reputation.

We shall not, in this Article, attempt to go into the *musical* department of this general subject. The singing habits and customs of the early churches, with the changes taking place in them from generation to generation, form a theme too extended to be treated of here. But in looking over old Psalm and music books such as have been used here in New England, we found one that was quite unique. It was Watts's Psalms with three books of Hymns, published at Exeter, N. H., in 1818. The Psalms occupied about two thirds of

the page on the upper part, and the tunes the other third below. But the part covered by the tunes was cut off from the upper part, and numbered as pages by themselves, so that when the Psalm and tune were not on the same page the singer could easily have them both before his eye at the same time.

Neither do we propose to venture near enough to our own times, in matters of psalmody and hymnology, to become involved in the strifes and competitions of modern hymn and tune books.

When Richard Mather, John Eliot, and Thomas Welde had put their heads together over the second verse of the first Psalm, and had settled it in their minds that the best rendering they could give, in measure and rhyme, was,

But in the law of Jehovah  
is his longing delight,  
and in his law doth meditate  
by day and eke by night,

it would have been a pleasure to have been able to place before their eyes some of the melodious hymns we are now singing; such, for example, as

“In the sweet by-and-by,  
We shall meet on that beautiful shore.”

They would probably have seen that the English language had capacities in this line far beyond anything of which they had ever dreamed.

In the “Joint-Letter,” so-called, written by Rev. William Hubbard of Ipswich and Rev. John Higginson of Salem, when they were venerable with age and almost ready to depart (Mr. Hubbard dying at the age of *eighty-three*, and Mr. Higginson at *ninety-two*), there is a passage, naturally connected with our subject, which is well fitted to stir the imagination and excite historical curiosity. They are writing, in that part of their letter, about “the persons who from four famous colonies assembled in the synod that agreed on our Platform of Church Discipline.” This was the Cambridge Platform, finished and enacted into ecclesiastical law in 1648. The writers say: “It is not yet forgot by some sur-

living ear-witnesses of it, that when the *synod* had finished the *Platform of Church Discipline*, they did with an extraordinary elevation of soul and voice then sing together the *song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb*, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation."

The words of this passage, as they stand in the Scripture, are: "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." The question is, Did the synod sing the words as they stand in the Scriptures, in the form of some anthem? or did they crowd these words by accommodation into some familiar tune of that day? or did they have a version of them in metre? In the year 1648 the churches of the Bay were using the Bay Psalm Book; for this was before the revision of President Dunster was completed. But the Bay Psalm Book confines itself purely to the Psalms, and has no passage whatever from other parts of the sacred writings. The same is true essentially of Sternhold and Hopkins. In Prince's version of 1758, we find these words from the Revelation put into metre, and serving as a kind of lofty Doxology, as follows:

Rev. xv. 3, 4. *The Song of Moses and of the Lamb sung by the Saints in Triumph.*

8 O LORD, Almighty GOD! thy works  
 both great and wondrous are:  
 Just King of saints, and true thy ways:  
 who shall not Thee revere?  
 And glorify thy name, O LORD?  
 who holy art alone:  
 For nations all shall worship Thee;  
 whose judgments now are known.

But in whatever form that Cambridge synod of 1648 sung the passage, there is something wonderfully interesting and inspiring in the thought that they closed that long and famous session by standing up, and, with "extraordinary elevation of soul and voice," singing together this lofty hymn of praise.