

God Will Take Care of You

A Hymn Story by Harry Eskew

This month's hymn story has Georgia connections. It also represents a ministry partnership between a husband and wife. Walter Stillman Martin, born in 1862 in Rowley, Massachusetts, studied for the ministry at Harvard University and became an ordained Baptist minister. Their common interest in music brought him together with his future wife, Civilla Durfee Holden, a veteran music teacher, born in 1866 in Jordan, Nova Scotia, Canada.

Civilla wrote the texts for many of the hymns her husband composed, including their popular "God Will Take Care of You." She described the circumstances that motivated the words of their famous song: "I was confined to a sick bed in a Bible school in Lestershire, New York. My husband was spending several weeks at the school, making a songbook for the president of the school. 'God Will Take Care of You' was written one Sunday afternoon while my husband went to a preaching appointment. When he returned, I gave the words to him. He immediately sat down to his little Bilhorn organ and wrote the music. That evening he and two of the teachers sang the completed song. It was then printed in the songbook he was compiling for the school." The hymn was first published in *Songs of Redemption and Praise* (1905), compiled by the evangelist John A. Davis, founder of the Practical Bible Training School in Lestershire.

In 1904 Civilla Martin also wrote "His Eye Is On the Sparrow," which Charles H. Gabriel set to music. She explained how she came to use the image of the sparrow: "I wrote 'His Eye Is on the Sparrow' in the company of a bedridden saint in Elmira, New York. I was reading and singing to her and during our conversation, I chanced to ask her if she did not sometimes get discouraged. This is when she responded about God's care for the sparrow. Her answer prompted me to find paper and pencil, and in a very short time I had completed the poem."

In 1916 the Martins lived in Wilson, North Carolina where Walter taught at Atlantic Christian College. In 1919 they became involved with the Disciples of Christ, and he began teaching and preaching among them. He served for a time on the staff of Standard Publishing Company and assisted in the production of *The Christian Hymnal*. Before the end of the year, the family moved to Atlanta, from where they became involved in Bible teaching and evangelism throughout the country.

Walter passed away December 16, 1935, and Civilla lived another thirteen years before her death on March 9, 1948. She was buried next to her husband in Westview Cemetery in Atlanta, considered one of the city's most prestigious and memorable cemeteries. The cemetery is located at 1680 Westview Dr. SW Atlanta, 30310. The graves are in the rear of the cemetery in the SW corner and on the northwest end of Section 18. The two "WILLIAMS" monuments are side-by-side facing west. The Martin plot is three rows behind.

*Be not dismayed whate'er betide, God will take care of you;
Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you.*

*Through days of toil when heart doth fail, God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail, God will take care of you.*

*All you may need He will provide, God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied, God will take care of you.*

*No matter what may be the test, God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon His breast, God will take care of you.*

*God will take care of you, through every day, O'er all the way;
He will take care of you, God will take care of you.*