

# HE LEADETH ME

*Joseph H. Gilmore, Lyrics, 1862;  
Tune: AUCHTON, William B. Bradbury, Music; 1864*

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On a Wednesday evening, Joseph Henry Gilmore (1834-1918) was preaching at a mid-week prayer service on the topic of Psalm 23. He wrote later, "I set out to give the people an exposition of the 23rd Psalm, but I got no further than the words 'He Leadeth me.' Those words took hold of me as they had never done before. I saw in them a significance and beauty, as it was in the midst of the darkest days of the Civil War, and those words were a reassurance that as long as we are sure we are being led by God, all will be well.

At the close of the meeting a few of us kept on talking about the thoughts which I had emphasized; and then and there, on a back page of my sermon notes, I penciled the hymn just as it stands today. I handed it to my wife, and thought no more of it. She sent it, without my knowledge, to the "*Watchman and Reflector*" magazine in Boston, where it was first published, in April of 1862. Three years later while attending a service at a church in Rochester NY, Gilmore happened to open a hymnal and, to his surprise, found that his poem had been set to music by William Bradbury and published in the Baptist hymnal.

William B. Bradbury (1816-1868) said that after seeing Gilmore's text in the Boston "*Watchman and Reflector*", he was so moved he composed the tune: AUCHTON for those words. Bradbury arranged the text into a stanza/refrain structure, added the final line of the refrain, and published the hymn in his "The Golden Censor" in 1864. AUCHTON (also known as HE LEADETH ME) means "unknown."

Bradbury died at his residence four years later and was not able to know that his tune with these words would go on to become a popular hymn in many different denominations. Because of its upbeat tempo, it has also become a favorite among bluegrass and old-time musicians, including such notables as Doyle Lawson and Doc Watson.

~Tull