

STORY OF GOSPEL HYMNS

Sankey's Collection of Sacred Songs and Solos

by

Ira D. Sankey

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CHAPTER EIGHT

~ U – Y ~

UNDER HIS WINGS

Words by W. O. Cushing

Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“Under His wings I am safely abiding;
Though the night deepens and tempests are wild.”*

As Mr. Moody used to approach the seminary building at Northfield, Massachusetts, to conduct the morning worship, the young ladies there would join in the singing of this hymn as he entered the room. It was one of their popular hymns, as it was also of the Estey Quartet made up of the leading singers of the seminary.

The music of this hymn was among my later compositions.

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A young man in a hospital in Western Massachusetts was once visited by a minister, and after he had prayed, the invalid asked him to sing his favorite song, *“Under His Wings,”* saying that it had been the means of his conversion. The hymn was sung, and in a short time the listener had passed away to the shelter under his Master's wings.

VERILY, VERILY

Words by James McGranahan

Music by James McGranahan

*“O what a Saviour that He died for me!
From condemnation He hath made me free.”*

“About twenty years ago,” writes James Sprunt, of London, “Mrs. S— one evening left her home, near Blandford Square, to visit some of her friends. She was disappointed to find that they were not at home. She called upon others, but they also had gone out. Vexed in mind and weary in body she was returning to her home. Passing the doors of Omega Hall, she was invited to the service then being held inside. She entered, and enjoyed the service, especially the singing of ‘*O what a Saviour, that He died for me!*’

“This was good news to her soul. By the Spirit of God she had been taught her lost condition. What was she to do? She had been told in the Hall to repent and believe the Gospel, to accept Christ as her Saviour, and to rest her soul on the finished work of Calvary’s cross. She heard all this, but did not obey. But when she retired that night her mind could not rest. During her sleep she dreamed that she was in the meeting and had again joined in the hymn, ‘*O, what a Saviour, that He died for me!*’ and with the dreamy singing she awoke to say, not in a dream and not in unbelief, but with true faith in God’s Son, ‘*From condemnation He hath made me free.*’”

WAITING AND WATCHING FOR ME

Words by Marianne Hearn

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“When my final farewell to the world I have said,
And gladly tie down to my rest.”*

At one of Mr. Moody’s meetings in Farwell Hall, Chicago, this testimony was given on one occasion:

“For many years past I have been an infidel, and often lectured to audiences in opposition to the Bible. Today, in the presence of all you who see me, I declare that I am a converted man. I owe the softening of my hitherto stony heart to a Gospel hymn sung by Mr. Bliss, the refrain of which is, ‘*Will anyone then, at the beautiful gate, be waiting and watching for me?*’

“It reminded me so tenderly of my Christian wife, parents, brothers, sisters and children who have gone before me that it quite broke me down; and now Christ and the Word have become my best hope and stronghold.”

WELCOME! WANDERER, WELCOME!

Words by Horatius Bonar

Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“In the land of strangers,
Whither thou art gone.”*

“An editor of a paper in the South,” says one who was connected with the Florence Mission at the time this incident occurred, “lost all through drink and dissipation, and one day left his wife and five children to look after themselves. Without bidding them good-bye he left home, determined not to return until he was a man and could live a sober life.

“In New York he sank still lower. One night he pawned some of his clothing; but soon he was again penniless and had no place to sleep. He then wrote a note to his wife, bidding her good-bye, saying they would never see each other again, as he had decided to die that night. He was walking toward East River when the sound of music attracted his attention. He looked up and saw the sign, ‘The Florence.’ That was the name of his oldest daughter. He listened; a lady was singing a song his wife used to sing on Sunday afternoons at home, words that went to his heart,

*‘In the land of strangers, whither thou art gone,
Hear a far voice calling, “My son, My son!
Welcome! Wanderer, welcome! Welcome back to home!
Thou hast wandered far away: Come home, come home!’*

“The song, coupled with the name that was his daughter’s, led him to think we were praying for him. He came in, drunk as he was, and asked us to do so. He became a convert and an earnest Christian worker, and has held a position of responsibility in business for many years, he and his family having been reunited.”

Written for me by Dr. Bonar, in 1883, this hymn became the favorite song of the choir of over fifteen hundred voices, led by Percy S. Foster, at our meetings in the great Convention Hall in Washington during the winter of 1894.

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS

Words by Joseph Scriven
Music by Charles C. Converse

*“What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear.”*

Thousands have been cheered in time of trouble, and so led nearer to Christ, by this sweet and simple hymn; for very few hymns have been more widely published or more frequently sung.

The author was born in Dublin in 1820, and came to Canada when he was twenty-five. There he lived a useful life until his death in 1886. The young lady to whom he was to be married was accidentally drowned on the eve of their wedding day. This led him to consecrate his life and fortune to the service of Christ. Though a graduate of Trinity College and a man of refinement, he chose humble duties. One afternoon he was seen walking down the streets of Port Hope, where he lived, dressed as a plain workingman and carrying a saw-horse and a saw on his mission of help.

A citizen, noticing that a friend recognized him, said:

“Do you know that man? What is his name and where does he live? I want some one to cut wood, and I find it difficult to get a sober man to do the work faithfully.”

“But you can’t get that man,” was the reply.

“That is Mr. Scriven. He won’t cut wood for you.”

“Why not?” queried the gentleman.

“Because you are able to pay for it. He only saws wood for poor widows and sick people.”

“Until a short time before his death it was not known that he had a poetic gift. A neighbor, sitting up with him in his illness, happened upon a manuscript copy of *“What a friend we have in Jesus.”*”

“Reading it with great delight and questioning Mr. Scriven about it, he said that he had composed it for his mother, to comfort her in a time of special sorrow, not intending that anyone else should see it. Some time later, when another Port Hope neighbor asked him if it was true that he composed the hymn, his reply was: “The Lord and I did it between us.”

Returning from England in 1875, I soon became associated with P. P. Bliss in the publication of what later became known as *“Gospel Hymns No. 1.”* After we had given the completed compilation to our publishers I chanced to pick up a small paper-covered pamphlet of Sunday school hymns, published at Richmond, Virginia. I discovered this and sang it through, and determined to have it appear in *“Gospel Hymns.”* As the composer of the music was my friend C. C. Converse, I withdrew from the collection one of his compositions and substituted for it, *“What a friend we have in Jesus.”* Thus the last hymn that went into the book became one of the first in favor.

As published in the small Richmond hymnal, the authorship of the words was erroneously attributed to the great Scotch preacher and hymn-writer, Dr. Horatius Bonar. We were in error, also, in assigning the words to him. Some years afterward Dr. Bonar informed us that he was not the author, and that he did not know who wrote it. It was not until six or eight years after the hymn first appeared in our collection that we learned who the author really was.

WHAT MUST IT BE TO BE THERE?

Words by Mrs. Elizabeth Mills

Music by George C. Stebbins

*“We speak of the land of the blest,
A country so bright and so fair.”*

“You see that I am still in the land of the dying,” wrote Philip Phillips, The Singing Pilgrim, shortly before his death at Delaware, Ohio. “Why I linger so long is to me a problem. The precious Saviour is more to me than I ever expected when I was well. Often during the night seasons I have real visions; I am walking on the banks of the Beautiful River, and getting glimpses of the bright Beyond. The lines that come most often to me are these:

*“We speak of the land of the blest,
A country so bright and so fair,
And oft are its glories confest,
But what must it be to be there?”*

“Blessed be God! I shall soon know. What a singing time we will have when we get there!”

WHAT SHALL THE HARVEST BE?

Words by Emily S. Oakley Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Sowing the seed by the daylight fair,
Sowing the seed by the noonday glare.”*

In the winter of 1876 Mr. Moody and I were holding meetings in Chicago in a large building owned by John V. Farwell, one of Mr. Moody’s first and most valued friends in that city. It was our custom to hold temperance meetings on Friday afternoons. At one of these meetings the following testimony was given:

“At the breaking out of the war in 1861 I enlisted in the army and was soon appointed a first lieutenant. I was not yet eighteen and had never been away from home influences. I had never tasted liquor and did not know one card from another. The regiment to which I was assigned was principally officered by young men, but many of them were old in dissipation.

“This new life was attractive to me, and I entered upon it with avidity. I was soon a steady drinker and a constant card-player. I laughed at the caution of the older heads, and asserted with all the egotism of a boy that I could abandon my bad habits at any time I wanted to. But I soon found that my evil desires had complete control over my will. In 1870, being a physical wreck, I resigned, and determined to begin a new life. Time and again I failed, and at last I gave up all hope and abandoned myself to the wildest debauchery, speculating with reckless indifference on how much longer my body could endure the strain.

“In anticipation of sudden death I destroyed all evidence of my identity, so that my friends might never know the dog’s death I had died. It was while in this condition that lone day wandered into this Tabernacle and found a seat in the gallery. There I sat in my drunken and dazed condition, looking down upon well-dressed and happy people.

“I concluded that it was no place for me, and was just about to go out, when out of a perfect stillness rose the voice of Mr. Sankey singing the song, ‘*What Shall the Harvest be?*’ The words and music stirred me with a strange sensation. I listened till the third verse had been sung:

‘Sowing the seed of a lingering pain,
Sowing the seed of a maddened brain,
Sowing the seed of a tarnished name,
Sowing the seed of eternal shame;
Oh, what shall the harvest be?’

“These words pierced my heart. In desperation I rushed downstairs and out into the snowy streets. I soon found a saloon, where I asked for liquor to drown my sorrow. On every bottle in the bar-room, in words of burning fire, I could read ‘*What shall the harvest be?*’ When I took up my glass to drink I read, written on it, ‘*What shall the harvest be?*’ and I dashed it to the floor and rushed out again into the cold, dark night.

“The song still followed me wherever I went, and finally drew me back to the Tabernacle two weeks later. I found my way into the inquiry room and was spoken to by a kind-hearted, loving brother. With his open Bible he pointed me to the Great Physician who had power to cure me and heal me of my appetite, if I would only receive him.

“Broken, weak, vile and helpless, I came to him, and by his grace I was able to accept him as my Redeemer; and I have come here to-day to bear my testimony to the power of Jesus to save to the uttermost.”

We were all deeply touched by this testimony, and there was scarcely a dry eye in the audience. A week later this man came into our waiting-room and showed me a letter from his little daughter, which read about as follows:

“Dear Papa: Mamma and I saw in the Chicago papers that a man had been saved in the meeting there who was once a lieutenant in the army, and I told mamma that I thought it was my papa. Please write to us as soon as you can, as mamma cannot believe that it was you.”

This letter was received by the man at the general post-office. The mother and their two children were sent for, and with the help of Mr. Moody a home was soon secured for them and employment for the man. He was asked to go to many places to give his experience, and he soon became so effective in his addresses that his friends prevailed upon him to study for the ministry.

Eventually he became a pastor of a large church in the Northwest, where he labored for a number of years till his death, in Evanston, Illinois, in 1899. His name was W. O. Lattimore. He wrote a hymn for me, entitled, “*Out of the darkness into light,*” which I set to music.

The author of “*What shall the harvest be?*” who was born at Albany, was a frail, delicate woman, always an invalid, never having known, as she once said, an hour of health in all her life.

WHEN JESUS COMES

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Down life’s dark vale we wander,
Till Jesus comes.”*

One day in 1872 Mr. Bliss heard a conversation between two of his friends, who were speaking on the subject of the return of our Lord. One of the ladies quoted a line from a work of Anna Shipton, *“This may be the day of His coming,”* and spoke of the joy and comfort the thought gave her. Mr. Bliss was much impressed, more deeply than ever before, as to the reality of this subject; and a few days after as he was coming downstairs from his room, still occupied with the thought of looking for Christ’s appearing, he commenced singing, *“Down life’s dark vale we wander,”* the words and music coming to him as he took the successive steps down the stairs. He at once wrote it down just as we have it to-day in *“Gospel Hymns.”*

WHEN THE MISTS HAVE ROLLED AWAY

Words by Annie Herbert

Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“When the mists have rolled in splendor
From the beauty of the hills.”*

I sang this hymn for the first time in The Free Trade Hall, in Manchester, in 1883, at one of Mr. Moody’s meetings. The service was held at eight o’clock on a gloomy winter morning. The hall was densely crowded and filled with mist, so much so that the people could hardly be discerned at the farther end of the hall. I felt the need of something to brighten up the meeting, and then and there decided to launch this new song. It was received with much enthusiasm, and at once became a favorite of Mr. Moody’s, and continued to be so until his death.

WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER

Words by J. M. Black

Music by J. M. Black

*‘When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair.’*

“While a teacher in a Sunday-school and president of a young people’s society,” says the author of this hymn, “I one day met a girl, fourteen years old, poorly clad and the child of a drunkard. She accepted my invitation to attend the Sunday-school, and joined the young people’s society.

“One evening at a consecration-meeting, when members answered the roll call by repeating Scripture texts, she failed to respond. I spoke of what a sad thing it would be, when our names are called from the Lamb’s Book of Life, if one of us should be absent; and I said, ‘O God, when my own name is called up yonder, may I be there to respond!’ I longed for something suitable to sing just then, but I could find nothing in the books. We closed the meeting, and on my way home I was still wishing that there might be a song that could be sung on such occasions. The thought came to me, ‘Why don’t you make it?’ I dismissed the idea, thinking that I could never write such a hymn.

“When I reached my house my wife saw that I was deeply troubled, and questioned me, but I made no reply. Then the words of the first stanza came to me in full. In fifteen minutes more I had composed the other two verses. Going to the piano, I played the music just as it is found to-day in the hymn-books, note for note, and I have never dared to change a single word or a note of the piece since.”

WHERE IS MY BOY TO-NIGHT?

Words by Robert Lowry Music by Robert Lowry

*“Where is my wandering boy to-night
The boy of my tenderest care?”*

A mother came to me in Boston and asked me if I would try to find her wandering boy in California when I should go there with Mr. Moody to hold meetings. I promised to do what I could. For several weeks, as opportunity presented itself, I searched the cheap boarding-houses for the young man. At last I found him in the slums of the city and asked him to come to our meetings. He refused, saying that he was not fit to be seen there; but after much persuasion he came.

One evening I sang: “*Where is my wandering boy,*” and prefaced it with a few remarks, saying that I knew of one dear mother in the East who was praying for her wandering boy to-night. This, together with the song, touched the young man’s heart, and he found his way into the inquiry room, where, with my open Bible, I was enabled by God’s grace to lead him into the light.

I wrote to his mother and told her that her boy had been found, and that he was now a professed Christian. She sent me money to pay his railway fare back to Boston, and in a short time he had reached home and received a hearty welcome. He soon found employment, and became a useful citizen, and has since been a follower of Christ.

* * *

“I heard Chancellor Sims relate,” states H. B. Gibbud, “that he was once traveling with a man from the West who was on his way to visit his father, whom he had left years before when he was a boy. There had been trouble between them, and the father had told the son that he could go. In his anger the boy said that he would, and that he would never return.

“He had gone West, where he became a wealthy ranch owner; but he had never written to his father and had held the anger in his heart toward him all those years. Then he told the Chancellor how it was that he was now returning. A train on which he had been traveling had been snowed in, and people living near had made up a load of provisions and taken them to the imprisoned passengers. Then it was discovered that Mr. Sankey was on board, and at the people’s request he came out on the steps and sang: ‘*Where is my wandering boy?*’ That song touched this man’s heart, led him to God, and he was now going east to seek reconciliation with his parents.”

* * *

A wayward boy was brought by a friend to the evening service of J. H. Byers, of Stanberry, Missouri. Having learned something of his condition, Mr. Byers asked the leader of the choir to sing as a solo: “*Where is my wandering boy to-night?*” which he did with great feeling. The boy was converted, the next evening he united with the church, and he has continued to be an active, praying worker ever since.

The young man’s parents were devoted Christians. On the same night and until the next afternoon, for what was an unknown reason to them, they were led to pray most earnestly for their lost boy. During the time when the prayer-meeting was being held, they were comforted, and believed that they would hear good news. In a few hours they received a telegram that their boy was saved.

At the meeting where this hymn was sung there were present the parents of two other boys who had left their homes, and as the solo was sung they prayed that their boys might be saved and brought home. In a few days letters were received from those boys, telling their parents that they were saved on the night when the solo was sung and the prayers were sent up for them.

The author of this hymn, which has done more to bring back wandering boys than any other, became a follower of Christ at the age of seventeen. After a score of years in different pastorates he accepted the professorship of letters in his alma mater, Bucknell University, together with the pastorate of another church. This double service he performed for six years, and then moved to Plainfield, New Jersey, where he lived until his death, in 1899, at the age of seventy-three.

Dr. Lowry will continue to preach the Gospel in his hymns long after his sermons have been forgotten. Many of his hymns were written after the Sunday evening service, when his body was weary but his mind refused to rest.

WHITER THAN SNOW

Words by James Nicholson
Music by Wm. G. Fisher

*“Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole,
I want Thee forever to live in my soul.”*

“In the spring of 1893,” relates Mr. Bradley, a Methodist minister in Utah, “a lady who had come from Ireland as a Mormon immigrant several years before was brought under very pungent conviction of sin, which lasted for several days. She attended our services several times, but seemed to get no relief. On the following Monday morning, while she was about her work as usual, the burden had become almost unbearable. As she worked she began to sing, ‘*Lord Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole;*’ and when she came to the closing words, ‘*To those who sought Thee, Thou never saidst No,*’ a feeling came over her like a flash, she says, that He would not say ‘No’ to her. From that moment the burden was lifted and she was filled with joy.”

* * *

Mr. Fischer, the composer, was a resident of Philadelphia, and in 1876 was the leader of the Moody and Sankey choir in the great building at Thirteenth and Market streets, in that city.

"WHOSOEVER WILL"

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“‘Whosoever heareth,’ shout, shout the sound!
Send the blessed tidings all the world around.”*

Henry Moorehouse, the English evangelist, preached seven sermons on John 3:16 in Chicago during the winter of 1869-70. Those sermons made a very deep impression on Mr. Bliss, Mr. Moody and others, and from that time a new and clearer view of the love of God was experienced by many who went forth to preach – perhaps not less about the law, but surely more about the boundless love of God in Jesus Christ.

As an outcome of this experience the hymn was written at that time. In singing it, Bliss put special emphasis on the word “*whosoever*.” So he helped many a man to believe in the magnificent offer of salvation, and – like Richard Baxter, the famous London preacher – to praise the Lord,

“... I thank God,” he said, “for the word ‘*whosoever*.’ If God had said that there was mercy for Richard Baxter, I am so vile a sinner that I would have thought he meant some other Richard Baxter; but when he says ‘*whosoever*,’ I know that it includes me, the worst of all Richard Baxters.”

WHY NOT TO-NIGHT?

Words by Eliza Reed

Music by Ira D. Sankey

“Oh, do not let the Word depart,
And close thine eyes against the light.”

A tram-car man was passing along the broadway at Deptford, England, where some Christians were singing at an open-air meeting.

“Oh, do not let the Word depart,
Nor close thine eyes against the light,
Poor sinner, harden not thy heart,
Thou would’st be saved – Why not to-night?”

He felt the force of the appeal and hastened home to pray. Though he knelt down and plead earnestly, no light, or peace, or rest came. A fortnight passed away in this state of uncertainty, and on the following Sunday he was so miserable that he could not go to his work on the tram-car.

In the evening he went to a chapel and remained for the prayer-meeting. The leader of the open-air meeting, in which the hymn was sung a fortnight before, happened to be present, and he saw the young man weeping and covering his face with his handkerchief. Praying the Lord to give him a word for this troubled soul, the leader asked: “Are you trusting Christ?”

“No, but I am seeking Him,” the man replied. And there he found Him, to the joy of his soul. Thus, in the providence of God, the Christian worker who was the cause of producing the anxiety, without knowing at the time any of the circumstances, was also the means of removing it. This is but one of the numerous instances of the usefulness of “*Why not To-night?*” in evangelistic meetings.

WINDOWS OPEN TOWARD JERUSALEM

Words by P. P. Bliss
Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Do you see the Hebrew captive kneeling,
At morning, noon and night, to pray?”*

While attending a Sunday service at the State Prison in Joliet, Illinois, where he had gone to sing, P. P. Bliss heard H. G. Spafford of Chicago, who wrote “*It is well with my soul*,” address the prisoners, and use Daniel in Babylon as an illustration of Gospel truth, asking the question in closing, “Are your windows open toward Jerusalem?” This suggested the hymn to Mr. Bliss. About a month before his death Mr. Bliss came to Chicago to attend a convention called by Mr. Moody, and there, at a morning meeting, where over a thousand ministers were present, he sang, “*Are your windows open toward Jerusalem?*” with intense spiritual feeling.

One minister cried out:

“God bless Mr. Bliss for that song!”

His face fairly shone as he sang, and half of those present were in tears under the influence of the song. Mr. Moody, filled with emotion, leaned his head forward upon the desk. It was the last time he heard his beloved friend and brother sing.

I often used to sing this song as a solo in connection with Mr. Moody’s lectures on the prophet Daniel.

WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Sing them over again to me,
Wonderful words of Life.”*

“While visiting an old man, who suffered much from rheumatic gout,” narrates a Methodist minister of Birmingham, England, “I was led to start up, ‘*Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of Life.*’ When I had finished and while the tears were coursing down his cheeks, he exclaimed, ‘Oh, sing them over again to me, those wonderful words of life! For they take my pain away.’ And so I repeated that God-sent message to the poor old sufferer, who soon afterward passed away to the land where there is no more pain.

“On another occasion this hymn became very useful to me. I was preaching to a crowded audience at Dartmouth on a Sunday evening, when a young man fell from his seat near the pulpit, and the service was in danger because of the confusion. I started singing, ‘*Wonderful Words of Life,*’ in which the whole congregation joined heartily. By the time we had sung the hymn through the young man had recovered consciousness and found his seat again, listening earnestly to my sermon on the theme, ‘In God’s Word there are spirit and life.’ Those present thought his case a living illustration of the song and sermon.”

YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Words by W. T. Sleeper

Music by George C. Stebbins

*“A ruler once came to Jesus by night,
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;”*

“One evening in November, 1886,” says the superintendent of a boys’ school, “I was walking along a street in St. Joseph, Missouri, when I saw before me a great crowd gathered around a door.

“On coming nearer I saw that it was at the entrance of the hall of the Young Men’s Christian Association. In the doorway stood some young men, singing. Just as I came near enough to hear they began to sing:

*‘A ruler once came to Jesus by night,
To ask Him the way of salvation and light;
The Master made answer in words true and plain,
Ye must be born again, again.’*

“When they came to the chorus the sword of the Spirit entered my soul. It seemed to me that I was brought face to face with the Lord Jesus. There on the street, while that song was being sung, I asked him to teach me how to be born again – and he did it. I accepted an invitation to the service for the evening, and after that service, for the first time in my life, I publicly acknowledged Christ as my Saviour.

“I have always considered that it was through the influence of that hymn that my soul was awakened. Many times have I thanked God for the song, as well as for the courage he gave to his disciples to sing it in that public way.”

* * *

Many years ago an English evangelist sent me this incident:

“We were holding evangelistic meetings,” he said, “in a town in Perthshire, and there was one who helped us more effectually than we were at first aware of. I hardly know how we became acquainted with ‘Blind Aggie;’ for, besides being old and blind, she was a great sufferer and could seldom creep beyond her doorstep.

“We were strangers in the place and no one told us of her; yet in the providence of God one of our party was led to visit her little room, discovering what a saint she was and how deeply interested in all she had heard about our intended meetings. She helped us mightily by prayer, and as far as she could by individual work.

“Lodging in the same flat with blind Aggie was a seamstress – a poor, giddy, foolish girl – in whom she took a deep interest. With great difficulty she persuaded this girl to attend one of our meetings. While the girl was at the meeting Aggie was praying for a blessing upon her; and when she returned Aggie asked many questions, but to her sorrow could not find that any impression had been made on the young woman’s heart.

“The good old woman induced the thoughtless girl to go again, and when she returned the second time it was late, and blind Aggie had already gone to bed. But the girl burst into the old woman’s room crying: ‘Oh, Aggie, where are you? I must tell you!’

“‘Well, dear, what is it? Come and tell me.’

“‘Oh, but I want a light first, I canna tell ye in the dark.’

“Though Aggie never had use for a candle, she told the girl where to find one. After it was lighted the girl burst forth from a full heart:

““Oh, Aggie, woman, I didna laugh this time! They sang a hymn, and it kept saying, ‘*Ye must be born again,*’ and it just laid hold on me, Aggie, and oh! I’m born again! Jesus has taken me, Aggie!’”

* * *

“On a Sunday evening,” relates a young lady of Dunfermline, Scotland,

“I went with a companion to take a walk in the public park, when our attention was drawn to an open-air meeting. While we were standing there listening, the hymn ‘*Ye Must be Born Again*’ was given out and sung. Two lines of the last verse,

*‘A dear one in heaven thy heart yearns to see
At the beautiful gate may be watching for thee,’*

Took a firm hold on me, and I felt that I must be born again, for I never could get there of myself. That night I went to the meeting and decided for Christ, and ever since that hymn has been very dear to me.”

YET THERE IS ROOM

Words by Horatius Bonar
Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“‘Yet there is room!’ The Lamb’s bright hall of song,
With its fair glory, beckons thee along.”*

Dr. Bonar wrote this hymn at my request. I had been singing Tennyson’s great poem, “*Late, late, so late, and dark the night and chill,*” at our meetings in Great Britain, in 1873-74, and, on asking permission of the owners of the copyright to use it in my collection of songs, was refused. I then requested Dr. Bonar to write a hymn that should cover much the same ground. “*Yet there is room*” was the result. It was one of the first hymns for which I wrote music. It always had a very solemnizing effect on the meetings, especially when the last lines were sung: “*No room, no room – oh, woful cry, ‘No room.’*”

YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION

Words by H. R. Palmer

Music by H. R. Palmer

*“Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;”*

Mr. Palmer says:

“This song was an inspiration. I was at work on the dry subject of ‘Theory’ when the complete idea flashed upon me, and I laid aside the theoretical work and hurriedly penned both words and music as fast as I could write them. I submitted them to the criticism of a friend afterward, and some changes were made in the third stanza, but the first two are exactly as they came to me. The music was first written in A flat; but I soon saw that B flat was better, and for many years it has appeared in that key. I am reverently thankful it has been a power for good.”

* * *

A friend contributes this incident: “Twenty years ago, when the State prison at Sing Sing, New York, had women as well as men within its walls, a lady used to visit the women’s department. Every Sunday afternoon the inmates were permitted to come out and sit in the corridor to hear her talk, and to sing hymns with her.

One day some of the women rebelled against an order of the matron, and a terrible scene followed. Screams, threats, ribaldry and profanity filled the air. It was said, by those who knew, that an uprising among the women prisoners was worse and more difficult to quell than one among the men. The matron hastily sent to the men’s department for help. Suddenly a voice rose clear and strong above the tumult, singing a favorite song of the prisoners,

*‘Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;
Each victory will help you
Some other to win.
Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus,
He’ll carry you through.’*

There was a lull; then one after another joined in the sacred song, and presently, with one accord, all formed into line and marched quietly to their cells.”

* * *

A minister who at the time was laboring there, writes me that when Dr. Somerville, of Scotland, and Mr. Varley, of England, were in New Zealand, in the seventies, in connection with Young Men’s Christian Association work, many young men found strength for life’s temptations in the first lines of this hymn, which was sung at every meeting for months.

* * *

“Some twenty-four years ago,” writes James A. Watson, of Blackburn, England, “the Presbyterian church of England was preparing to issue a new book of praise, ‘*The Church Praise*,’ now in use. I was asked to send in a suitable list of hymns for the young. Among the number I sent ‘*Yield not to temptation*,’ but to my regret, when I got a draft copy of the proposed hymn-book, that hymn was not in it.

“Three or four Sundays afterward I was requested by the teacher of the infant class in the St. George’s School, where I have been superintendent for over forty years, to visit a dying boy. I found him unconscious. All that his widowed mother could tell me about him was that he had kept saying: ‘*He’ll carry me through*.’

“When I asked her if she knew what he meant, she told me that she did not. She did not attend church or school. I told her that it was the chorus of a hymn, and pointed out how the good Shepherd was carrying her little boy through the valley, how he was gathering her lamb in his loving arms.

“I also told her that the Saviour would carry her through her trouble, would comfort, strengthen and keep her, and at last bring her to the happy land where death-divided ones will meet to part no more. I was so much impressed by the incident that I wrote to the convener of the hymn-book committee, and pleaded for the insertion of the hymn in the new book. The committee put it in, and for twenty-three years the young people of our Presbyterian church have been able to sing it when wanted, all through the comfort it had been to a little dying boy, the only son of a widow, on a back street of Blackburn.”

~ end of chapter 8 ~

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