

STORY OF GOSPEL HYMNS

Sankey's Collection of Sacred Songs and Solos

by

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CHAPTER TWO

D - H

DARE TO BE A DANIEL

Music by P. P. Bliss

Words by P. P. Bliss

*“Standing by a purpose true,
Heeding God's command.”*

Mr. Bliss wrote this song especially for his Sunday-school class in the First Congregational Church of Chicago. It has been much admired and was often used by me in connection with Mr. Moody's lecture on Daniel.

This hymn and “*Hold the Fort*” were prohibited by the Sultan from use in Turkey.

DARK IS THE NIGHT

Words by Fanny J. Crosby

Music by T. E. Perkins

*“Dark is the night, and cold the wind is blowing,
Nearer and nearer comes the breakers' roar;”*

When I was chorister in Mr. Moody's Sunday-school, on the north side of Chicago, we frequently used this hymn.

On the memorable Sunday night when the city was destroyed by fire, and I had made my escape in a small boat out into Lake Michigan, this song came to my mind, and as I sat there watching the city burn I sang:

“Dark is the night, and cold the wind is blowing,
Nearer and nearer comes the breakers’ roar;
Where shall I go, or whither fly for refuge?
Hide me, my Father, till the storm is o’er.’

DEPTH OF MERCY

Words by Charles Wesley
Music arr. from J. Stevenson

*“Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”*

An actress in a town in England, while passing along the street, heard singing in a house. Out of curiosity she looked in through the open door and saw a number of people sitting together singing this hymn. She listened to the song, and afterwards to a simple but earnest prayer.

When she went away the hymn had so impressed her that she procured a copy of a book containing it. Reading and re-reading the hymn led her to give her heart to God and to resolve to leave the stage. The manager of the theater pleaded with her to continue to take the leading part in a play which she had made famous in other cities, and finally he persuaded her to appear at the theater. As the curtain rose the orchestra began to play the accompaniment to the song which she was expected to sing.

She stood like one lost in thought, and the band, supposing her embarrassed, played the prelude over a second and a third time. Then with clasped hands she stepped forward and sang with deep emotion:

*“Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?”*

This put a sudden stop to the performance; not a few were impressed, though many scoffed. The change in her life was as permanent as it was singular. Soon after she became the wife of a minister of the Gospel.

* * *

First published in “*Hymns and Sacred Poems*” in 1740, this hymn has been set to a number of tunes. But the most popular one in America is the melody arranged from Stevenson, with the chorus,

*“God is love! I know, I feel;
Jesus lives and loves me still.”*

DOXOLOGY

Words by Thomas Ken, 1695
Music by Wilhelm Frank

*“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.
Praise Him, all creatures here below.”*

On the night of October 15, 1884, a great crowd was gathered on the street outside a Republican headquarters in New York City, awaiting the returns of an important election. It was two o'clock in the morning before the last bulletin was posted. Previous to this announcement a thousand voices had been singing uproariously, “We won't go home till morning;” but the moment the message was displayed the stereopticon flashed out the line, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Good night.”

The Tribune, in reporting the incident, said: “A deep-voiced man in the throng pitched the doxology, and a mighty volume of song swelled upward. Then the lights went out and the happy watchers departed to their homes.”

* * *

A child on the top of Mount Washington was with her father above the clouds, while a thunderstorm flashed and rumbled below. Where they stood all was perfect calm and sunshine, though the eye found nothing but the blue of heaven and a few rocks to rest on. “Well, Lucy,” said her father, “there is nothing to be seen here, is there?”

But the child exclaimed: “ Oh, papa, I see the doxology! All around seems to say,

*“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”*

The doxology was a great solace to the starving “boys in blue” in Libby prison. Day after day they saw, some of their comrades passing away, while fresh, living recruits for the grave arrived. Late one night they heard through the stillness and the darkness the tramp of new arrivals who were stopped outside the prison door until arrangement could be made for them within.

In the company was a young Baptist minister, whose heart almost fainted as he looked on those cold walls and thought of the suffering inside. Tired and weary, he sat down, put his face in his hands and wept.

Just then a lone voice of deep, sweet pathos, sang from an upper window:

“Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;”

A dozen more voices joined in the second line; and so on till the prison was all alive and seemed to quiver with the sacred song. As the song died away in the stillness of the night, the young man arose and said:

“Prisons would palaces prove,
If Jesus would dwell with me there.”

* * *

This doxology has been almost universally adopted as a praise hymn by all churches. Wilhelm Frank, the composer of the tune, “Old Hundred,” was a German.

* * *

The first Moody and Sankey meeting held in the Agricultural Hall, London, was opened by the singing of “*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.*”

~ E ~

ETERNITY

Words by Ellen M. H. Gates

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Oh, the clanging bells of Time!
Night and day they never cease.”*

Having carried in my pocket for several months the words of the hymn “*Eternity*,” which the author, Ellen M. H. Gates, had sent me, I handed them, one day in Chicago in 1876, to my friend P. P. Bliss, asking him to write music for them. Three days later he had composed the tune.

The hymn was much used at our meetings both in Great Britain and the United States. Before singing it, I used to tell the story of Robert Annan, of Dundee, Scotland. He was one of the worst men who ever lived in that town, but after having been converted became one of the most useful missionaries of the place. On leaving his little cottage home one morning to go to his mission work, he took a piece of chalk from his pocket and wrote on the flagstone of the walk which led to his house the single word “*Eternity*.”

A few minutes later he saw a child fall from one of the vessels in the harbor. Being a bold, strong swimmer, he threw off his coat and shoes, and plunged into the bay. He saved the child, but at the cost of his own life. His body was carried home over the word “*Eternity*,” which he had written a few hours before.

On my last visit to Scotland, about five years ago, I went to see his widow, and found that the writing had been cut in the stone by direction of the Honorable James Gordon, the Earl of Aberdeen. Thousands go to see it every year.

“Mr. Annan’s minister took me to the beautiful cemetery of the place, where a fine monument, ten feet high, marks the last resting-place of the hero.

* * *

A worker in the English Village Mission writes:

“I had been engaged during the previous week with a lot of indifferent people in a midland village without the smallest token of blessing, and on that memorable Sunday night of the Tay Bridge disaster I went to the service with a sad heart. The service was a solemn one, and at the close we sang:

*‘Oh, the clanging bells of Time!
Night and day they never cease.’*

“The song touched the hearts of the people. About this time, as we afterwards learned, a number of conversions occurred, and a blessing has rested on that place for many years. One of the converts has been a very successful missionary in a large northern city. I can scarcely remember any place where some one or more of your songs and solos was not used of God in blessing souls. In one church alone I received one hundred and fifty into fellowship, and I think not less than one-third of that number, when making application for membership, mentioned some particular hymn that had led them to decision.”

EVENING PRAYER

Words by J. Edmeston
Music by George C. Stebbings

*“Saviour, breathe an evening blessing,
Ere repose our spirits seal.”*

It rarely falls to the lot of any hymn to be sung under such trying circumstances as was this, during the Boxer outbreak in China, by a company of beleaguered missionaries who had gathered together one night in great fear lest they should have to suffer the fate of so many who were giving up their lives rather than deny their Lord.

The following account of the singing is furnished by Miss Helen Knox Strain, one of the missionaries present that night.

“The Woman’s Union Missionary Society has a magnificent work just outside of the city of Shanghai. No harm had come to us up to this time, but serious threats and unpleasant rumors were rife; we dared not so much as put our heads out at night, though forty little soldier-men played at keeping us safe.

“Our missionaries have two centers at that place, and they meet often for prayer and consultation. At this particular time the rumors were so frightful, and the threats to burn our homes that very night so distressing, that we had a memorable meeting. Separated from home and friends, facing death in a far-off land, and full of tenderest feelings, we lifted our hearts in song.

*“Though destruction walk around us,
Though the arrows past us fly;
Angel guards from Thee surround us:
We are safe if Thou art nigh.”*

“Out of the storm each soul, renewing its strength, mounted up with wings as eagles and found peace in the secret of His presence.

“Our Saviour breathed, in very deed, an ‘evening blessing’ upon us, the fragrance of which remains even unto this day. The last verse of the hymn, “*should swift death this night o’ertake us,*’ was omitted. It seemed too probable that it might. We wanted only to think of the safe-keeping, and such, thank God, it proved to be.”

* * *

Edmeston, a voluminous hymn-writer, was an architect by profession, and a member of the Established Church at Homerton, England, where he resided. The theme of this hymn was suggested to him by a sentence in a volume of Abyssinian travels:

“At night their short evening hymn, ‘*Jesus Forgive Us,*’ stole through the camp.”

Though first appearing in the author’s “*Sacred Lyrics*” in 1820, and to be found in the older church hymnals, it had no special prominence until Mr. Stebbins’ setting became known. Since then it has come into general use, and has been adopted by many of the church hymnals.

The music was written in 1876, for the choir of Tremont Temple, Boston, of which Mr. Stebbins was then the director.

Published two years later in “*Gospel Hymns Number 3,*” it became a favorite at once with the great choirs of our meetings and with other evangelistic choirs, and has since then been used wherever the “*Gospel Hymns*” are sung, even in the remote places of the earth.

EVEN ME

Words by Mrs. Elizabeth Codner
Music by William B. Bradbury

*“Lord, I hear of showers of blessing,
Thou art scattering full and free.”*

A gentleman in England sends this incident:

“A poor woman, in a dark village, attended a High Church mission, where the good Gospel hymn, ‘*Even Me*’ was sung from a printed leaflet.

A few days afterward the old woman became seriously ill, and soon she died. But she seemed to have taken in all the Gospel through this hymn, and to the last repeated with reverence and joy ‘*Even me, even me,*’ not remembering one word of the sermon that she heard at the mission. This was in 1877. Soon after we had an evangelistic meeting in the same village, in a barn three hundred years old, where this hymn was sung with great effect.

~ F ~

FOLLOW ON

Words by W. O. Cushing
Music by Robert Lowry

*“Down in the valley with my Saviour I would go,
Where the flowers are blooming and the sweet waters flow.”*

“I wrote this hymn in 1878,” W. O. Cushing tells me, “longing to give up all for Christ who had given his life for me, I wanted to be willing ‘to lay everything at his feet, with no wish but to do his will, to live henceforth only for his glory. Out of this feeling came the hymn, ‘*Follow On.*’

“It was written with the prayer and the hope that some heart might by it be led to give up all for Christ. Much of the power and usefulness of the hymn, however, are due to Mr. Lowry, who put it into song.

GO BURY THY SORROW

Words by Mary A. Bachelor
Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Go bury thy sorrow,
The world hath its share.”*

For many years this hymn was one of my favorite solos. In its original form it read, *“Bury thy sorrow, hide it with care;”* but when Mr. Bliss found it in a newspaper he arranged it to read, *“Go bury thy sorrow, the world hath its share,”* and set it to music.

It has been blessed to thousands of people, and will remain as one of his best productions when many of his other songs are forgotten.

* * *

The author of the hymn was the daughter of a minister. When she wrote these lines she was living with her brother, whom she greatly loved. He also was a minister, and had the usual cares and burdens to carry that are incident to a pastor’s life. To him she confided all her joys and sorrows.

One day, after having disclosed to him some peculiar trial which she was enduring, she was reproached by her conscience for having needlessly added to his already numerous cares. She stood by the open window, and saw the long, heavy shadows cast by the tall poplar trees across the lawn, and the thought came to her:

“That is just what I have done to my brother! Why did I do it? Why did I not rather bury my own sorrow, and allow only words of cheer and brightness to reach his ears?”

With such thoughts in her mind, and with tears of regret filling her eyes, she retired to her little attic bedroom, and there wrote the hymn that has been so blessed.

* * *

A lady who had suffered much, and had passed through many great trials, set much store by this hymn. One day as she sang it her little daughter, who was playing in the room, looked up into her mother’s face and saw tears rolling down her cheeks. The child called out:

“Mamma, are you digging the sorrows all up again?”

GOD BE WITH YOU

Words by E. Rankin, D.D.

Music by W. G. Tomer

*“God be with you till we meet again;
By His counsels guide, uphold you.”*

The late Dr. Rankin, president of Howard University, Washington, D. C., said regarding this oft used parting hymn:

“Written in 1882 as a Christian good-bye, it was called forth by no person or occasion, but was deliberately composed as a Christian hymn on the basis of the etymology of ‘good-bye,’ which is, *‘God be with you.’*”

The first stanza was written and sent to two composers - one of unusual note, the other wholly unknown and not thoroughly educated in music. I selected the composition of the latter, submitted it to J. W. Bischoff - the musical director of a little book we were preparing - who approved of it, but made some criticisms, which were adopted.

It was sung for the first time one evening in the First Congregational Church in Washington, of which I was then the pastor and Mr. Bischoff the organist. I attributed its popularity in no little part to the music to which it was set. It was a wedding of words and music, at which it was my function to preside; but Mr. Tomer should have his full share of the family honor.”

William Gould Tomer, the author of the music, is of German ancestry. He has been a school teacher, a soldier in the civil war, and a clerk in the Treasury department. He was teaching school in 1882 when he wrote the music of *“God be with you.”*

~ H ~

HALLELUJAH, TIS' DONE

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Tis the promise of God full salvation to give,
Unto him who on Jesus, his Son, will believe.”*

A minister from England, in telling of a certain meeting, says: “Among the converts was a man somewhat advanced in years, who was very anxious about the salvation of his wife, and expressed a wish that I should visit her. I did so repeatedly, and explained to her in very simple words the plan of salvation, but she could not comprehend the meaning of my message. Every time I left, however, she would express a strong desire that I return.

One day I went in just before dinner, and talked to her about Jesus, but no light seemed to dawn upon her mind. Then the thought struck me to sing something to her, and so I commenced, *“Tis the promise of God, full salvation to give.”* When I was through the chorus, she exclaimed, ‘Sing it over again.’ I did so, time after time, and when I asked her to assist me, she joined in very heartily.

The light dawned on her dark mind while we were singing, the big burden of sin was removed from her heart, and her face was lighted up with holy joy as she exclaimed, *‘Hallelujah, ‘tis done! I do believe in the Son; I am saved.’*

Just then her husband walked in for his dinner, and she shouted out to him, ‘Ah, lad! I’ve got it! Hallelujah! ‘tis done!’ Their hearts were full of joy over the wonderful discovery she had made, and I was grateful to God for a sinner brought to Christ by the ministry of holy song.”

* * *

In compiling his book, “Gospel Songs,” in 1874, Mr. Bliss desired to publish in it the well-known hymn, “*Hallelujah! Thine the Glory,*” then much used in religious services. The owners of the copyright refused, and he wrote “*Hallelujah, ‘tis done,*” both words and music, to supply the want.

Hundreds of souls have been led to decide for Christ by this hymn, and the church has reason to rejoice at that refusal.

HALLELUJAH WHAT A SAVIOUR!

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Man of Sorrows, ’ what a name
For the Son of God, who came.”*

Written in 1876, shortly before his death, this was the last hymn I heard Mr. Bliss sing. It was at a meeting in Farwell Hall in Chicago, conducted by Henry Moorehouse. A few weeks before his death Mr. Bliss visited the State prison at Jackson, Michigan, where, after a very touching address on “The Man of Sorrows,” he sang this hymn with great effect. Many of the prisoners dated their conversion from that day.

When Mr. Moody and I were in Paris, holding meetings in the old church which Napoleon had granted to the Evangelicals, I frequently sang this hymn as a solo, asking the congregation to join in the single phrase, “*Hallelujah, what a Saviour,*” which they did with splendid effect.

It is said that the word “Hallelujah” is the same in all languages. It seems as though God had prepared it for the great jubilee of heaven, when all his children shall have been gathered home to sing “**Hallelujah to the Lamb!**”

HE KNOWS

Words by Mary G. Braluard

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“I know not what awaits me,
God kindly veils mine eyes.”*

Mr. Bliss lost his life in the terrible railroad wreck at Ashtabula, Ohio. His trunk, however, reached Chicago safely, as it had gone before by another train. In his trunk was discovered this hymn.

Mr. Bliss had rearranged the words of the poem to some extent, and had composed the tune. Sentence by sentence, the words are full of pathetic interest in connection with the author's sudden death so soon afterward.

HE LEADETH ME

Words by Joseph H. Gilmore
Music by William B. Bradbury

*“He leadeth me! O, blessed thought!
O, words with heavenly comfort fraught.”*

“I had been talking,” said Mr. Gilmore, “at the Wednesday evening lecture of the First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, in 1862. The Twenty-third Psalm was my theme, and I had been especially impressed with the blessedness of being led by God - of the mere fact of his leadership, altogether apart from the way in which he leads us and what he is leading us to.

“At the close of the service we adjourned to Deacon Watson's home, at which I was stopping. We still held before our minds and hearts the thought which I had just emphasized.

“During the conversation, in which several participated, the blessedness of God's leadership so grew upon me that I took out my pencil, wrote the hymn just as it stands to-day, handed it to my wife - and thought no more about it.

“She sent it without my knowledge to ‘*The Watchman and Reflector*,’ and there it first appeared in print.

“Three years later I went to Rochester to preach for the Second Baptist Church. On entering the chapel I took up a hymn-book, thinking, ‘I wonder what they sing.’ The book opened at ‘*He leadeth me*,’ and that was the first time I knew my hymn had found a place among the songs of the church. I shall never forget the impression made upon me by coming then and there in contact with my own assertion of God's leadership.”

Mr. Bradbury, finding the hymn in a Christian periodical, composed for it the very appropriate tune with which it has ever since been associated.

HERE AM I, SEND ME

Words by Daniel March

Music by S. M. Grannis

*“Hark! the voice of Jesus crying,
‘Who will go and work to-day?’”*

I found this poem in a newspaper and set the words to a tune by S. M. Grannis entitled “Your Mission” - a hymn which was sung in the Senate Chamber in Washington by Philip Phillips on one occasion when Abraham Lincoln was present. The President was so charmed with the song that he requested that it be repeated.

HIDING IN THEE

Words by William O. Cushing

Music by Ira D. Sankey

*“O safe to the Rock that is higher than I,
My soul in its conflicts and sorrows would fly.”*

“*Hiding in Thee*’ was written in Moravia, New York, in 1876,” writes Mr. Cushing. “It must be said of this hymn that it was the outgrowth of many tears, many heart-conflicts and soul-yearnings, of which the world can know nothing. The history of many battles is behind it. But the occasion which gave it being was the call of Mr. Sankey. He said: ‘Send me something new to help me in my Gospel work.’”

“A call from such a source, and for such a purpose, seemed a call from God. I so regarded it, and prayed: ‘Lord, give me something that may glorify Thee.’”

“It was while thus waiting that *‘Hiding in Thee’* pressed to make itself known. Mr. Sankey called forth the tune, and by his genius gave the hymn wings, making it useful in the Master’s work.”

HO! REAPERS OF LIFE’S HARVEST

Words by I. B. Woodbury

Music by I. B. Woodbury

*“Ho! reapers of life’s harvest,
Why stand with rusted blade?”*

President Garfield was fond of this hymn, and it was sung at his funeral. In addressing an audience of young people on one occasion, Garfield said, in substance, regarding his own conversion:

“Make the most of the present moment. No occasion is unworthy of our best efforts. God often uses humble occasions and little things to shape the course of a man’s life. I might say that the wearing of a certain pair of stockings led to a complete change in my life.

“I had made a trip as a boy on a canal boat and was expecting to leave home for another trip; but I accidentally injured my foot in chopping wood. The blue dye in my home-made socks poisoned the wound and I was kept at home. A revival broke out meanwhile in the neighborhood, and I was thus kept within its influence and was converted. New desires and new purposes then took possession of me, and I was determined to seek an education in order that I might live more usefully for Christ.”

It is said that this hymn has been the means of the conversion of thousands of souls in Australia and Great Britain.

HOLD THE FORT!

Words by P. P. Bliss

Music by P. P. Bliss

*“Ho! my comrades, see the signal
Waving in the sky”*

Just before Sherman began his famous march to the sea in 1864, and while his army lay camped in the neighborhood of Atlanta on the 5th of October, the army of Hood, in a carefully prepared movement, passed the right flank of Sherman’s army, gained his rear, and commenced the destruction of the railroad leading north, burning blockhouses and capturing the small garrisons along the line. Sherman’s army was put in rapid motion pursuing Hood, to save the supplies and larger posts, the principal one of which was located at Altoona Pass.

General Corse, of Illinois, was stationed here with about fifteen hundred men, Colonel Tourtelotte being second in command. A million and a half of rations were stored here and it was highly important that the earthworks commanding the pass and protecting the supplies should be held.

Six thousand men under command of General French were detailed by Hood to take the position. The works were completely surrounded and summoned to surrender. Corse refused and a sharp fight commenced. The defenders were slowly driven into a small fort on the crest of the hill. Many had fallen, and the result seemed to render a prolongation of the fight hopeless. At this moment an officer caught sight of a white signal flag far away across the valley, twenty miles distant, upon the top of Kenesaw Mountain.

The signal was answered, and soon the message was waved across from mountain to mountain:

“Hold the fort; I am coming. W. T. Sherman.”

Cheers went up; every man was nerved to a full appreciation of the position; and under a murderous fire, which killed or wounded more than half the men in the fort – Corse himself being shot three times through the head, and Tourtelotte taking command, though himself badly wounded - they held the fort for three hours until the advance guard of Sherman’s army came up. French was obliged to retreat.

This historical incident was related by Major Whittle at a Sunday-school meeting in Rockford, Illinois, in May, 1870. Mr. Bliss was present, and the song “*Hold the Fort*” was at once born in his mind. The next day Whittle and Bliss held a meeting in the Young Men’s Christian Association rooms in Chicago.

Bliss went on the platform and wrote the chorus of this hymn on the blackboard. He there sang the verses for the first time in public, and the audience joined in the chorus. Soon after he had it published in sheet form.

Mr. Bliss said to me once, not long before his death, that he hoped that he would not be known to posterity only as the author of “*Hold the Fort*,” for he believed that he had written many better songs. However, when I attended the dedication of the Bliss monument, at Rome, Pennsylvania, I found these words inscribed:

P. P. Bliss,
Author of “*Hold the Fort*.”

The pine tree from which Sherman’s signal was flown was cut down a few years after the war, and was made into souvenirs, I receiving a baton with which to lead my choirs.

* * *

“*Hold the Fort*” was used frequently in our meetings in Great Britain during 1873-74. Lord Shaftesbury said at our farewell meeting in London: “If Mr. Sankey has done no more than teach the people to sing ‘*Hold the Fort*,’ he has conferred an inestimable blessing on the British empire.”

On a trip to Switzerland, in 1879, I stopped over Sunday in London with the family of William Higgs, and attended morning services at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. While seated in a pew with Mrs. Higgs and three of her daughters, I was discovered by Mr. Spurgeon.

At the conclusion of his address he sent one of his deacons down to the pew, inviting me to his private room at the rear of the pulpit. There I was warmly greeted by the great preacher.

In the course of our conversation he said:

“A few days ago I received a copy of a bill pending in Parliament in relation to the army, with a letter from a Christian gentleman, a member of the parliament, asking if I couldn’t preach a sermon on this bill. I have decided to preach that sermon to-night, and I want you to come and sing, ‘*Hold the Fort.*’

I replied that he was not a man to be denied; and although I had not expected to sing in public in London on this trip, I would gladly comply with his wish if I could have a small organ to accompany myself upon.

This I supposed that he would not have, as he did not approve of organs at public worship and never used one in his church; but he replied that when I arrived at the meeting there would be an instrument on the platform for me.

In the evening, at the close of his address he announced that I was present and would sing ‘*Hold the Fort;*’ and he asked them all to join heartily in the chorus. An organ had been secured from the Students’ College. When the chorus was sung it was heard blocks away.

At the conclusion of the service Mr. Spurgeon exclaimed: “There now, I think our roof will stay on after that!”

On reaching Switzerland I sang in many cities. Sailing across Lake Lucerne, and ascending the Rigi, there I again sang ‘*Hold the Fort,*’ much to the interest of the Swiss peasants.

An indication of the impression this and other American songs made upon the people may be seen in the case of the two actors who came on the stage in one of the largest theaters in England and attempted to caricature Mr. Moody and myself. The galleries struck up “*Hold the Fort,*” and kept on singing the piece until the actors had to withdraw from the stage.

On their reappearing, with the purpose of continuing the performance, the song was again started, and continued until that part of the entertainment was given up. I have been informed that the cabling of this incident to this country at the time it took place turned the attention of our countrymen more thoroughly to our work across the sea than all the reports previously sent in relation to the movement over there.

* * *

Shortly after the evangelistic work of Henry Varley in Yorkville and Toronto, about 1875, when the songs in the first edition of “*Gospel Hymns*” were heard all over the land, a carpenter and his apprentice were working on a building in Yorkville.

The man was a Christian and had consecrated his fine tenor voice to the Master’s use. The boy had just given himself to Jesus and was also a singer for the Lord. One morning, as they met at the usual hour for work, the following dialogue took place between them:

“Do you know who is coming here to work to-day?”

“No, I did not hear of anybody coming here.”

“Well, there is; and it is Tommy Dodd.”

“And who might Tommy Dodd be?”

“He is a painter, and the greatest drunkard and wife-beater in Yorkville.”

“Well, Joe, we must give him a warm reception.”

“Yes, we will sing like everything, so that he can’t get a bad word in.”

So, when Tommy Dodd came, they struck up “*Hold the Fort*.” And they kept on singing till he left his work and came closer to listen. He asked them to sing it over and over again, joining heartily in it himself, for Tommy was very fond of singing.

This was followed by an invitation to the young men’s prayer-meeting, where the Spirit led him to surrender to Christ. Afterward he was found at the church instead of the saloon, singing the sweet songs of Zion.

Dr. R. A. Torrey, on his return from England recently, called on me and told me that while he and Mr. Alexander were holding meetings in Belfast, one of the most enthusiastic helpers was a typical Irishman, well-known as an active worker all over the city.

“He was constantly bringing drunkards to the front and dealing with them,” said Dr. Torrey, “and holding meetings in the open air all over the city. The story of his conversion was exceedingly interesting. At that time he was a prisoner in a cell in Belfast. The window of his cell was open. Mr. Sankey was singing ‘*Hold the Fort*’ in another building.

The words floated across through the open window into his cell and went home to his heart. There in his cell he accepted Christ under the influence of this hymn. I think he never saw Mr. Sankey in his life.”

HOME OF THE SOUL

Words by Mr. Ellen H. Gates

Music by Philip Phillips

*“I will sing you a song of that beautiful land,
The far away home of the soul.”*

“Now I saw in my dream that these two men [Christian and Hopeful] went in at the gate; and lo, as they entered, they were transfigured; and they had raiment put on them that shone like gold.

“There were also those that met them with harps and crowns and gave them to them; the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honor. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them: **‘Enter ye into the joy of your Lord!’** . . . Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold; and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads and palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal . . . After that, they shut up the gates which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them.”

– Bunyan's *“Pilgrim's Progress.”*

“The above extract,” wrote Philip Phillips, “I sent to Mrs. Ellen H. Gates, asking her to write a suitable hymn.

“When the verses were forwarded to me, in 1865, I seated myself in my home with my little boy on my knee, and with Bunyan's immortal dream book in my hand, and began to read the closing scenes where Christian and Hopeful entered into the city; wondering at Bunyan's rare genius, and like the dreamer of old wishing myself among them.

At this moment of inspiration I turned to my organ, with pencil in hand, and wrote the tune.

This hymn seems to have had GOD's special blessing upon it from the very beginning. One man writes me that he has led in the singing of it at a hundred and twenty funerals.

“It was sung at the funeral of my own dear boy, who had sat on my knee when I wrote the tune. “

And I sang this hymn over the remains of my beloved friend, Philip Phillips, at Fredonia, New York.

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

Words by G. Keith
Music by M. Portogallo

*“How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word. “*

“Once at evening devotion in the old Oratory of Princeton Seminary,” Dr. C. S. Robinson relates, “the elder Hodge, then venerable with years and piety, paused as he read this hymn, preparatory to the singing.

“In the depth of his emotion he was obliged to close his delivery of the final lines with a gesture of pathetic and adoring wonder at the matchless grace of God in Christ; and his hand silently beat time to the rhythm instead:

‘I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake.’”

* * *

Giving an account of a visit to General Jackson at the Hermitage, in 1843, James Gallagher says in the *Western Sketch Book*:

“The old hero was then very frail and had the appearance of extreme old age; but he was reposing with calmness and confidence on the promise and covenant of God. He had now been a member of the church for several years.”

During the conversation which took place, the General turned to Mr. Gallagher, and remarked:

“There is a beautiful hymn on the subject of the exceeding great and precious promise of God to His people. It was the favorite hymn of my dear wife, till the day of her death. It commences in this way:

‘How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord.’

I wish you would sing it now.”

So the little company sang the entire hymn.

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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