

A BLIND SINGER.

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"GOLDEN RULE."

According to a recent writer, in order to find the picturesque points of the great West, which he had so graphically described, he was forced to travel hundreds of miles, to endure discomforts innumerable, and to rough it in camps pitched in the chaparral. The interesting is so deeply overlaid by the commonplace that an author must delve deep ere he can find the true metal.

So, in attempting to delineate the chief points in the life of any composer of popular hymns, it becomes a matter of some moment to select one to whom our sympathies turn instinctively, and most writers would think that they had found a jewel from the deep sea when they came to Fanny Crosby. Her full maiden name was Frances Jane Crosby, but she prefers to have all her friends call her by the old pet title even now.

"Jesus, keep me near the cross,"

appeared in "Bright Jewels," 1869. Mrs. Frances Jane Van Alstyne, as she is recognized and honored now since her marriage to Mr. Alexander Van Alstyne in 1858, was born at South East, N. Y., in 1823. When she was only six weeks old she was made blind by improper treatment of a childish distemper: "A warm poultice laid on my eyes," says she in her quaint, bright, pathetic way, "did the mischief, and caused the loss of sight in a moment." When about twelve years of age she was sent to the Institution for the Blind in New York city; she studied there seven years, and then became a teacher under the same roof for eleven years more. In the fall of 1851 she united with the Thirtieth Street Methodist Episcopal church, and has since lived in New York as one of the loveliest and best of God's afflicted children. It is touching to think of the happy and devoted couple as their home life rises on our imagination. Her husband is also blind; he was a teacher, likewise, in the institution where she was educated. He is quite a musician in his way; he makes tunes, and she makes words for him. They never saw each other; but they are lovers, comrades, and friends all the same.

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,"

was published in "Bright Jewels," 1869. Fanny Crosby from the beginning has possessed a wonderful readiness or fluency in composition. Many of her pieces are known to have been given out as if almost offhand. Mr. Doane used to come in with his energetic and frank summons, plant himself at the piano, start a fresh tune, say, "Fanny, I want you to write," and she would put the verses on paper while he waited. "Safe in the arms of Jesus," was written in twenty minutes. But the very fact of its spontaneity argues that the soul of the author was full to overflowing with the love of the divine Master, and that its sudden pouring forth was but natural. She has written more than two thousand hymns, most of which have been introduced into many collections in America and in Great Britain; and these links of the far-reaching chain of her life's great song serve to draw together the people who, through her melodious words, have come to know and love the very name she bears. Generous old Dr. George Duffield wrote to the publishers of his son's books, just before his death, this estimate of Mrs. Van Alstyne's work: "I rather think her talent will stand beside that of Watts and Wesley, especially if we take into consideration the number of hymns she has written."

"Pass me not, O gentle Saviour,"

we find in "Songs of Devotion," 1870. Simplicity and earnestness are the main characteristics of this author's poems, and most of them have been put to music that will catch and hold the popular attention. "Pass me not, O gentle Saviour," is a great favorite in our prayer meetings. The cry of Bartimeus by the wayside has a never-failing interest for the sinner and the saved. "Lord, that I might receive my sight," cry the sin-sick and blind of soul; and the answer of the Redeemer of the world is received with the same eager longing by him who knows that his salvation is assured, but longs for a repetition of the words of

healing, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

"Saviour, more than life to me,"

was written for "Brightest and Best," 1875, and is one of the most popular and beautiful hymns she has ever made. The secret of this woman's life is an open secret. She lives, as she here sings, "closer, closer, Lord, to thee." When she was fifteen years old, they told her that she was always to live in darkness thereafter. She then showed her pluck as she afterward showed her piety. She went by herself and wrote a poem, of which we can give only one verse:—

"O, what a happy soul I am!
Although I cannot see,
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be,
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
Whew! to weep or sigh because I am blind
I cannot, nor I won't."

"Come, O come, with thy broken heart,"

was published in "Calvary Songs," 1875. Heart always speaks to heart. In this lies the vast strength of Mrs. Van Alstyne's hymns. They sink into one's memory, and hold their place in times of utmost turmoil and tempest of pain. A pathetic incident

it for Bradbury's "Golden Chain," 1861. It owes something to the music, but more to the taste of those that seem to like to sing mostly to sinners, frequently to things, and sometimes to God. The spectacle of one's singing out at the top of his breath, "while passing through the air," on the way to heaven, "Sweet hour of prayer!" over and over again, argues a much stronger attachment to conference meetings than modern congregations are apt to display.

Just now this honored and beloved woman has been making a few public addresses. She is an elderly Christian, at last, about seventy years old. She dresses in good taste, as a delicate and refined lady might be expected to do; she speaks forcibly, for she is vigorous and perfectly unbroken still. Her face is pleasant, her voice is sweet, her manner is modest. Every one loves to take her by the hand; and each friend says as he departs, "The Lord spare her to us for yet many a year!"

DUMPING.

Our spiritual life begins, and goes on by the giving up of bad habits. Peter puts it plainly: "Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new born



FANNY CROSBY.

was related by one engaged in missionary work in this city. Among those led not long since to the Saviour was a woman who was wont to use her tongue most foully. "I had to get out of her house when she began to talk," said the brother. Of course, this was a bad state of affairs for her children. But the Lord saved her, and all this was changed. For a while past she has been in the hospital, sick. For her recovery an operation was necessary. She was willing to undergo that, but, before an anaesthetic was administered, she prayed, "O, Lord, keep the door of my mouth." She feared lest she should say something amiss while unconscious, so strong had been the former evil habit. "Did I say anything wrong?" asked the sufferer of the surgeons as she came to consciousness, after the operation was over. "No, indeed," was the reply; "the only words you have uttered were, 'Safe in the arms of Jesus.'" We felt that the salvation of this woman was a miracle of grace. So, indeed, is the salvation of any soul.

"Sweet hour of prayer! Sweet hour of prayer!"

is one of the earliest, one of the weakest, and yet one of the most popular, of all Fanny Crosby's productions. She wrote

babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby."

Christian workers desire new graces. They read of Barnabas. He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith, and much people was added unto the Lord. A given result from a given character. How many thousands have been thrown into a tumult of prayer by that text! And yet the majority fail. Let us fall back on the 'dumping' method.

We are Christians. We need say nothing about whiskey, tobacco, Sabbath-breaking, hates, grudges, and the like. But have we no prejudices, dislikes, fears, doubts, whims, notions, that are in the way of the Lord's sweet grace? You haven't liked to hear Mr. A. preach since you were told the naughty thing he said about you. You 'can't abide' Mr. B's interminable prayers, or Mrs. C's execrable singing, or to see Mr. D. take the collection with such an air, when he is really no better than he should be; and all along down the alphabet are those who have done you some small personal damage, the memory of which is like sand in the eyes or gravel in the shoes.

You want our Lord to come into your heart. Do you make ready for him? When you invite a friend you clear the guest

room of all rubbish, all odds and ends of common work. Even the dust must be wiped from the furniture, the stale air blown out and the dainty odor of flowers brought in. If Christ delays his coming, instead of begging and begging him to come, and half blaming him because he does not, would it not be well to see if you have thrown out all pride and selfishness and love of the world? He said that if your hand or foot caused you to fall into sin you must cut it off and cast it from you.

A whim may hinder our faith. Martha's overdone sense of propriety would have kept our Lord from working his greatest miracle and giving her back her brother. She had a faint hope that Jesus would raise Lazarus, yet she objected to having the grave opened, the very thing that was necessary for the dead man to be called forth. She had to lay aside that notion before her prayer was answered.

When we make up our minds to 'dump,' it is not such a difficult thing to do. A good man was shown how wrong was his dislike of a brother minister. It took three mortal hours of prayer to get his courage up to the point of going to the other to be reconciled. The adversary insisted that he would meet an ugly rebuff. At last he seized his hat and rushed off to the duty as if it were the bayonet charge of a forlorn hope. Before his confession was half out the other grasped his hand: 'You'll not get the start of me on that, old fellow. I've been ten times meaner than you have.' The result of that 'dumping' was a large incoming of grace.—Mrs. Jennie Fowler Willing, in *Union Signal*.

AN INCIDENT WITHOUT COMMENT.

A merchant of this city met an old acquaintance recently on an elevated railway train. In the course of conversation the man told him that since they had last met, a few years previously, he had passed through a wonderful experience. He then told a story which we reproduce in the briefest possible form.

He had been a member of the Produce Exchange, and had been in good circumstances. He fell into the habit of drink, not because he loved the taste of liquor, but a mania of thirst seemed to possess him, so that he often drank from twenty to thirty times a day. He soon lost his business, and drifted steadily downward. His wife and children were forced to leave him, and he became utterly discouraged, and was most of his time in a half-drunken state. While in this condition he chanced one day to meet a man he knew, who was a hard drinker like himself. After some conversation this man proposed that they should go to a certain mission to hear the singing. They went. A woman attached to the mission came and spoke kindly to them and invited them to remain; but they declined. The merchant's friend, however, felt drawn to return the next night. He went thereafter steadily every night for a week to the mission, feeling, he said, as though he could not stay away. Every night the faithful woman missionary would come and speak kindly to him and urge him to seek salvation; but he always declined. One night he felt as though he ought to make an effort to become a man again. While this feeling was in his heart, though he was even then in a drunken state, she came to him as usual and invited him to go forward. He got up at once and went with her. Before he knew what he was doing, he was kneeling at the altar, and she was praying for him, and then he began to pray for himself. He was fully converted, and went to work, in connection with the mission, to bring in others and save them. From that moment, he says, the desire for drink left him entirely. Started once more in the right way, he began to prosper. He notified his wife and children, and they came back to live with him, and now he is at the head of a happy and comfortable home. He believes, it is needless to say, most implicitly in the efficacy of prayer. He believes he was led, half drunk though he was, by the Holy Spirit to the meeting through the instrumentality of his drunken friend, and that the same divine influence prompted him to return night after night and finally to pray for himself.

GOD SOMETIMES TAKES AWAY earthly props that we may rest more completely on him.