

HYMNS WE SING.

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"Let me make the nation's songs, and I care not who makes its laws," clearly intimates that its author believed that the songs we sing are more potent in the formation of national character than are the educational forces of legal enactments. If this estimate of value be a correct one, then Church authorities cannot be too careful in the selection and publication of the "Songs of Zion." It is a matter for devout thanksgiving that our Methodist Hymnal is such an inspiring and instructive song treasury. The hymns we sing impart sound teaching, awaken holy aspirations, strengthen saving faith, and kindle purest emotions of love and gratitude.

Believing that a better knowledge of the origin of these sacred lyrics will tend to larger enjoyment and larger helpfulness, I have ventured to give, in this second article on this subject, an account of the origin, and suggestive incidents connected with some of the "hymns we sing."

Of Charles Wesley's immortal lyric, "Jesus, lover of my soul," it easily goes for the saying that scarcely any other can contend therewith for the place of supremacy. Henry Ward Beecher said, "I would rather have written that hymn than to have the fame of all the kings of all the earth." Its phraseology indicates that it was born of the sea. Shortly before it was written, Mr. Wesley had been "in perils in the deep." Voyaging homeward, in 1741, his vessel was overtaken by a terrific storm, and had well-nigh foundered. Escaping from the fury of the waves, the poet thought of life's storm-tossed sea, and sang :

"While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high:"

And from a heart filled with gratitude for deliverance and safe return to the home-land, he prayed :

"Safe into the haven guide,
Oh, receive my soul at last."

Few hymns have been so fruitful in help and blessing to dying mortals; and myriads of redeemed spirits have passed from the toils and storms of earth into the eternal refuge, saying or singing :

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

Incidents almost numberless could be recited. But space is limited and few must suffice.

On a winter's day, in 1872, a Christian worker of New York was visiting the Bellevue Hospital. He was requested to see an unknown British sailor, who was nearing the gates of the unseen world. Into what seemed to him the dull ear of death he recited the words of Wesley's immortal hymn, and departed, believing the lonely mariner to have launched out upon the eternal sea. But at the midnight hour there came a voice from that cot that echoed through the stillness of the ward, and these were the words it said :

"Jesus, Lover of my soul,"

Every line of every verse was distinctly pronounced, to the closing petition :

"Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."

For a few moments longer he assayed to repeat other sacred songs of love and home. But the end had come, and his lips were