

Pastor and People.

For THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN.

ANOTHER WONDERFUL HYMN AND ITS AUTHOR.

BY THE REV. DUNCAN MORRISON, M.A., OWEN SOUND

"JESUS, LOVER OF MY SOUL."

Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high!

Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
Till the storm of life is past,
Safe into the haven guide;
O receive my soul at last!

Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee
Leave, ah! leave me not alone;
Still support and comfort me!

All my trust on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing!

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find;
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind!

Just and holy is Thy name;
I am all unrighteousness;
False and full of sin I am,
Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin;
Let the healing streams abound;
Make and keep me pure within!

Thou of life the fountain art,
Freely let me take of Thee;
Spring Thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity!

The same in a mediæval dress, having the flavour,
if not the finish, of St. Bernard's, of Cluni:

Jesu, amator animæ,
Tuâ umbrâ tegeas,
Unde volvunt quum magnæ,
Atque hiems altius.

Conde, conde, O Jesu,
Donec vitæ heimes
Ducintegrum in portu,
Animam recepias!

Non asylum alium
Habeo; Te anima
Videt. Linque ne solum,
Usque me corabora.

Omnis spes, O maxime!
Atque Te auxilium
Meum. Caput protege,
Esto et presidium.

O mihi Tuque omnia,
Christe lapsus erige,
Indpem Tu rober,
Cæcum duc, et sana me.

Sanctus et misericors,
Sum vilis et impius,
Mendax, inops et nefas;
Generosus Tu purus.

Graciously et clemens;
Ignosces recipies;
Vitæque Tibi fons;
Cunctam sordem ablues.

O Salutaris Fons vitæ,
Liberé recipiam!
Sali vivens in corde
Secularum seculum.

Charles Wesley, the author of this celebrated hymn, may be set down in some respects as a phenomenon. He was number 13 of the nineteen children born to his father. In stature he was very small, as were also his father and his more famous brother, John. In disposition he was warm and impetuous, but very frank and amiable. In the matter of sacred song he stands alone. To him it was a passion to which he was ever ready to turn. On and on through life his thoughts fell easily into poetic numbers, and, at the great age of eighty years, when the long shadows were falling, he called his wife to his dying bed and dictated, as his last act:

In age and feebleness extreme.

Charles Wesley has written hymns which in point of excellence are unsurpassed, and in point of numbers outdoing any other genius, man or woman, that ever lived, having, with his brother John, composed nearly as many as all other authors put together.

Solomon, in his day, wrote 1,005 songs—a specimen of which we have in the Canticles; but Charles Wes-

ley has written, it is computed, about 7,000, and among these, 166 on the Lord's Supper, and over 200 on the Trinity! It cannot be expected, of course, that all these are first-class. How could they? How can any one mind, no matter how fertile, confining itself to one theme, and touching only one string of the golden lyre, strike out something entirely new every time something fresh and fragrant as the morn—so commanding as to meet with universal favour as a real contribution to the service of song in the house of the Lord? In point of fact, very few of those 200 hymns to the Trinity are ever used, though some of them have great poetic merit, still, not one of them is to be named with Heber's "Holy, holy!" And out of all his 7,000, besides those of his brother, also a voluminous hymnologist, only twenty-seven, including those translated from the German, have found their way into the recent Presbyterian collection, and not one of those 200 addressed to the Trinity! We are not surprised that Montgomery, than whom no one was better qualified to speak on such a subject, should have put it on record: "Charles Wesley was probably the author of a greater number of compositions of this kind—with less variety of matter or manner—than any other that can be named."

Still, while this charge may be broadly applicable to his effusions as a whole, we can never forget such imperial hymns as

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing:

Oh, for a heart to praise my God:

Hark, the herald angels sing:

Jesus, lover of my soul.

Had he never written any but these, his would have been no small contribution to the Church—a legacy indeed, of unspeakable value, for they bear upon them many a seal of the divine approval, and though more than a century has passed since they first saw the light, they have still upon them the dew of their youth; and it does one good to think of the thousands of voices in every land that are lifted up every Sabbath in the hallowed strains of those great hymns which give utterance to their feelings of penitence, joy, love, hope and their lofty aspirations after a better life.

But certainly, if we should be asked to name the greatest and best of Charles Wesley's hymns, we should have no hesitation in saying:

Jesus, lover of my soul.

What was the genesis of this hymn? What the circumstances under which it was written? It is plain from the recorded life of the Wesleys that many of their hymns owed their origin to some incident in the history of those great men. It was while spending a day at the Land's End, England, that Charles first thought of the hymn beginning

Lo, on a narrow neck of land,
Twixt two unbounded seas I stand, etc.

The point of rock on which the adventurer stands is about three feet broad at its termination, and some 200 feet perpendicularly over the sea, at the foot of which the waves break with great violence. On his right hand is the Bristol Channel, and on the left, the English Channel, and right before him is the great Atlantic. Here indeed is a situation fitted to touch—to inspire—such a man as our poet, and the hymn referred to is the fruit of that memorable day. Again:

See how great a flame aspires, etc.,

was written after spending a season among the Newcastle colliers. Stevenson tells us that the imagery of the first verse was suggested by the furnace-blaze and burning pit-heaps which to this day illuminate the whole neighbourhood in which they are found. The earthquake which took place March 8, 1750, gave rise to nineteen new hymns, among which is that grand one commencing

Lo, He comes with clouds descending,

But what was the genesis of "Jesus, lover of my soul"? The answer is that the poet, in his early evangelistic tours, was overtaken by a dreadful storm, when the courage of the seamen was tested to the last degree of endurance, and, in the violence of the tempest, a bird seeking shelter made its way to the vessel labouring in the gale, and alighted upon the breast of the poet, utterly unable to hold out any longer. To a nature so sympathetic, so full of pity and poetry, such a touching incident must at once have been both impressive and suggestive. The sight of such helplessness on the one hand and such a storm on the other could hardly fail to bring before him the helplessness of the sinner amid the storms of broken laws and crushing penalties, and, at the same time, the tenderness of Him who rides upon the storm, and whose love many waters cannot quench, neither the floods drown. This is the story of the genesis, for which I am indebted to a friend. Dr. Cuyler, some time ago, gave current to the same story, and the Doctor evidently accepted the same as being well authenticated. In turning over the lives of the Wesleys, I cannot find any trace of this incident; but the materials in my possession are of the most meagre description, and certainly nothing can be more likely than that this is the true genesis of the hymn under consideration.

One thing is clear from the life of Wesley that this hymn was penned near to the time of his conversion—in some respects a remarkable conversion—resulting from some intercourse with Peter Böhler, the Moravian missionary, with whom the two Wesleys were going to Georgia with the view of evangelizing the Indians. They returned to London, however, and Charles was prostrated by sickness, and then it was that the words of Peter Böhler proved spirit and life to his soul. He had formerly rested in what is called a legal righteousness, well pleased with himself, like the young man in the Gospel, but, under the instructions of this godly man, instructions rendered all the more impressive by this stroke of sickness, which at one time seemed likely to be fatal—his self-righteousness failed him, and the arrows of conviction drank up his spirits and left him a poor and helpless suppliant at the foot of the Cross, like the bird battered and broken down by the storm of which we have been speaking. But, renouncing his self-righteousness, and opening his eyes to the glory of a kingdom that cannot be moved—the glory that excelleth—he entered into liberty. He had now, when this hymn was penned, had several months' experience of the new life. He had tasted its strange, sweet joy—had risen to a higher level, and had come under a mightier inspiration than he had ever known in the days of his carnality; but the memory of that sick bed in 1738 and the experience of that season of grace then extended to him (and, shall we say, illustrated by the incident of the little bird finding refuge from the storm in his breast), followed him through life like the memory of Bethel in the case of the patriarch—followed him down to his dying hour, ever stimulating and ever sanctifying. That one day (27th May, 1738,) threw its glory over all his life—over all that went before and all that came after his conversion. During those fifty years that followed this great event, a brighter light every day shone on his path and a richer experience sprang up in his soul, and a mightier power every day flowed from his spirit—even the power of an endless life—till he stood perfect in all the will of God. Now read the hymn in the light of these things, and see how it shines!

A GRAND AND HELPFUL TRUTH.

What a grand thing the life is into the midst of which can be injected, as it were—like the branching veins of silver in the hard rock—the glorious rich metal of this divine influence. What a solemn and sublime thought it is that a Christian carries through this world in his heart no smaller possession than the productive seed which only needs its natural climate and its fostering skies to burst into the unfolding flower of endless and perfect glory! Ah, brethren, the truths that people nowadays are sometimes flinging in our faces as if we did not believe them—such as "here or nowhere must a man find his heaven; a man's blessedness consists not where he is, but what he is; heaven must be within a man and not merely round about him"—all these half truths, where did they come from? Out of a laboratory of an unscriptural spiritualism? No; there is not in all its instruments one alembic that can distil them. They come from that truth that the Spirit of God in us is the earnest of heaven for us; and he that begins to love, and trust, and rejoice in God here carries the essence of heaven wheresoever he goes.—*Rev. Dr. Maclaren.*

RING THE OLD BELL.

Dr. Thomas, the president of the Congregational Union of England, delivered an address which made a great impression. Here is an extract:

Ring the old bell in the pulpit, said he, and take care that it gives no uncertain sound, and the people will come out of their houses to listen. The man who understands the Gospel, and preaches it in earnest as one who believes, will not fail to draw people to hear him, if there be people to go. The old Park Street Chapel, although in a low, out-of-the-way place, and almost deserted, was soon filled when the people found out that a young man occupied the pulpit who had felt the power of the Gospel and could preach it to others. The place was soon found to be too small, and the largest tabernacle in the first city of the world was built for the young preacher, and for thirty years he has gathered together the largest congregations that have listened for so long a time to any preacher in any age. The Gospel alone can retain a strong hold upon men, and our spiritual religion is imperilled if we depart from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus.

LOVERS OF JESUS.

They that love Christ love to think of Him, love to hear of Him, love to read of Him. They love to speak of Him, for Him, to Him. They love His presence, His yoke, His name. His will is their law, His dishonour is their affliction, His cause is their care, His people are their companions, His day is their delight, His word is their guide, His glory is their end. They had rather ten thousand times suffer for Christ than that He should suffer by them.—*Mason.*