

WHY WE LOVE ISAAC WATTS.

By W. W. Davis.

"The fineness which a hymn or psalm affords
Is when the soul unto the lines accords."

—George Herbert.

Among all our hymn writers, and in the index of a late manual of worship there are nearly three hundred names given—none come to us with so warm a personal regard as Dr. Watts. He seems like an old friend. He was beloved of our ancestors for many generations. In fact, for a hundred years he had the field of song to himself. In my library is a copy of the *Psalms and Hymns of Isaac Watts, D.D.*, bound in one volume. Philadelphia, so late as 1823.

He is the poet of childhood. Can we ever forget in our first reader,

"Flow doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day,
From every opening flower."

And this lullaby sung by many a fond mother over the cradle comes to the grown man like an echo from glory:
"Hush! my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed!

Heavenly blessings without number
Gently falling on my head."

Certain hymns may exceed any one of Watts in popularity, as "Rock of Ages," by Toplady; "Just as I am," by Charlotte Elliott; "Lead, Kindly Light," by Cardinal Newman; "Nearer, my God, to Thee," by Mrs. Adams; "My faith looks up to Thee," by Dr. Smith; "Jesus, lover of my soul," by Charles Wesley. But for originality of treatment, variety of theme, for every mood, for every occasion, for every subject, Dr. Watts easily stands pre-eminent in his long list of sacred songs, excelled in number only by Charles Wesley.

In sublimity of thought, in majesty of utterance, one hymn of Dr. Watts stands above all others.

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,

And pour contempt on all my pride."

Matthew Arnold heard this song at Ian MacLaren's church in Liverpool, spoke of it afterwards as the greatest hymn in the language, was heard humming it to himself after dinner, and in a short time was dead. No fitter requiem for the son of Dr. Arnold.

We must not forget another gem of our infancy. Did you learn it in the crib or at Sunday school?

"When I can read my little clear
To man in the skies."

Some critic calls the last stanza the smoothest of all rhyme:

"There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll,
Across my peaceful breast."

It was the happy lot of Dr. Watts to make the longest visit on record. A delicate constitution, continued study, and frequent sickness, made it necessary to give up the active duties of his pastorate at Mark Lane's chapel, London, and he accepted the benevolent invitation of Sir Thomas Abney to become a member of his household. In this welcome retreat he remained from 1712 to his death in 1748. He gave the family his daily prayers and counsels, and they lavished upon the invalid every solace of a gracious hospitality.

Toplady was told by the Countess of Huntingdon that visiting Dr. Watts on one occasion, he said: You come to see me on a remarkable day. Why remarkable? she asked. Why, continued the doctor, on this day thirty years ago I came to the house of my good friend Sir Thomas Abney, intending to spend a single week under his friendly roof, and I have extended my visit to exactly thirty years. Lady Abney, who was present, added, And it is the shortest visit my family ever received.

Seen in a crowd, the good doctor would not have been taken for a man of genius. He was short and spare,

with a low forehead, small eyes, and dull expression unless excited. We have all heard his reply in one of his own stanzas to a man, surprised at his inferior appearance, exclaiming, What, is that the great Dr. Watts?
"Were I so tall to reach the pole,

Or grasp the ocean with my span,
I must be measured by my soul—

"The mind's the standard of the man."

A spirit of sweet resignation. To Lady Abney and the family, he would often say, "I bless God I can lie down with comfort at night, not being solicitous whether I wake in this world or another." He selected his burial place. Not with kings and statesmen under the gothic arches of Westminster Abbey, not with heroes and artists under the dome of St. Paul's cathedral, but in secluded Bunhill Fields, "deep in the earth, among the relics of his pious fathers and brethren, whom he had known in the flesh, and with whom he wished to be found in the resurrection."

In this gray old cemetery, open to the sky, aside from London's roar, Dr. Watts sleeps in glorious company: Joseph Hart, who sang

"Come, ye sinners, poor and needy,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,"
the learned John Owen, Daniel Defoe of Robinson Crusoe, John Bunyan of Pilgrim's Progress, George Fox of the Quakers, and Susanna Wesley, mother of John and Charles. Of several verses on her moss-covered tombstone, this is the last:

"A Christian here her flesh laid down,
The cross exchanging for the crown,
In sure and steadfast hope to rise,
And claim her mansion in the skies."

—Lutheran Observer.

PRAYER FOR COLLEGES.

Our valued contributor, "Ulster Pat," sends us the following timely item, which we publish with pleasure:

Last year the Rev. Chas. Brown, the President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, in the course of his presidential address made some remarks which may have a local application. If Canadians take Mr. Brown's remarks to heart, it would perhaps be the best service they could render to their theological colleges. The following are the remarks referred to: "Many things are prayed for in our prayer meetings. The pastor, when there is one, is generally lovingly remembered. When one is needed there is generally united prayer that God will send an under-shepherd, a man after His own heart, to be the guide and leader of the flock. Missionaries and their work are remembered, the Sunday school and its teachers, the Church in its manifold operations, and much more. It is a long time since I heard a prayer in any prayer meeting or from any pulpit on ordinary occasions, for our theological colleges, their principals, tutors, and students, and that God would continue to raise up and send forth preachers and pastors for our churches at home. Yet there is much need for the prayer. Organized Christianity is passing through a critical time. The prosperity and even the continuance of the Christian Church as an institution is intimately bound up with the ministry. Our history for the next fifty years will depend very largely on the men who occupy our pulpits, and I can conceive of no subject of more vital importance than that to which I now invite your attention—viz., the Christian ministry."

"A martyr in the cause of Italian liberty," says the *Rome Gazette*, "recently died in that city. Annibale Lucatelli was 85 years old. In the '50s he was active in many revolutions against the church, having been one of the ten brothers who incited the revolt of 1851, which failed. His brother was executed, and he was sentenced to the bagnio for life. Together with a number of colleagues he was pardoned in 1870, and received a professorship at the industrial museum, where he was known as King Humbert's personal friend."

THREE LAWYERS.

(By Rev. Frank P. Miller.)

Four hundred years ago, the tenth of July, John Calvin was born. This fact will turn the attention of Christians to his name and works. It may also be remembered that Calvin was a lawyer, who, as a law student, gave promise of exceptional ability. It is not generally known, or, perhaps, not common to think of, the debt of our Christian religion to men of the legal profession. Perhaps the first name, chronologically, will be disputed. I think rightly this name should be classed with lawyers. The three lawyers are Paul (Saul of Tarsus), Augustine and Calvin.

Now as to St. Paul. That he was a doctor of the law will be seen from the fact that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, an active force in execution of the laws, and with legal training. Augustine was a practitioner before the courts at Rome, and was a noted pleader when he became a Christian. Calvin is not known ever to have argued a case, yet he was qualified by a law course at Orleans, where, to use a statement by a biographer, "he was considered rather a master (teacher) than a scholar." In the absence of the professors he frequently supplied their places, and acquired so much esteem in the university that he was offered a doctor's degree. It is not a little suggestive that these three men, all lawyers,

should stamp their influence upon the Christian Church. In the first place, the legal mind better than any other is able to understand the force and evil of transgression of the law. Secondly, the legal mind can perceive the difficulties which must arise when the subject of pardon is raised. Thirdly, the legal mind is best equipped to arrange the materials of a case into a correct, logical and forceful system. It is no wonder, then, that Paul, Augustine and Calvin, three lawyers, should so markedly influence the whole of Christian history. Sin and redemption both relate to the law. 1 Cor. 15: 56; 1 John 3: 4; Matt. 1: 21. Our religion must have its legal side, which from one point of view is its chief side. Jesus came to deal with sin. Sin is transgression of the law. To deal with sin is the work, or prerogative, of lawyers. Hence, no man could be better fitted to expound the great facts of Christ's life and the features of the ceremonial law than a lawyer. The law and the gospel are not the same. They are related as a physician's diagnosis is related to his treatment of his case. Unless men have a true view of sin as related to God's law, they will have a faulty view of the work of Christ.

For their system of theology, as lawyers, it will be noted that these men went to the Fountain-head, who is God. They exalted him as Sovereign, as Law-giver (Isa. 33: 22), and exalted law, obligation, responsibility and faithfulness. They viewed God as Legislator, and exalted man as the administrator of the divine will. They taught human accountability under the divine will.

The effects of this system were marked. Under it grew such men as William of Orange, called the Silent; Jerome of Prague, Huss, Wickliffe, Coligny, Bunyan, Knox, Ridley, Latimer, Cranmer, John Howe, and thousands whose names are known only to him who knoweth the secrets of the universe.

Another effect was the establishment of republics in both State and Church. Another result was the exaltation of learning, which received a mighty impulse from this system.

It must be said, that no system can so surely be right, either as a philosophy or a religion, or both, as that which begins with God, and centers everything in his will. This is the chief trait of the system of these three lawyers, and their system is practically a unit. Theirs will be the final philosophy and final religion, and their system will battle on and on till he indeed becomes "all in all."—Herald and Presbyter.