

FEMALE HYMN WRITERS

BY REV. JOHN DUNBAR.

MR. EDITOR,—As you have once and again in the past placed before your readers notices of some of our more noteworthy hymn writers and as those if I rightly remember were all of the masculine race, it might not be out of place to give some very brief notices of a few of the most favoured of the other sex, who have shown that they are far from lacking in poetic power by not a few of their hymns, which in beauty and fervour will not suffer in comparison with the greatly gifted of their fellow-men.

Among these Miss Anne Steele well merits the first place, alike in the time, the number and the excellency of her hymns. Her father was a Baptist minister who died about the time she had attained to womanhood. By an accident in childhood she became a life-long invalid, yet not so as to deprive of her of doing much for her Saviour to whom she delighted to devote her loving life. Her more familiar hymns are "Father, whate'er of earthly Bliss," "Dear Refuge of my weary Soul," "The Saviour, oh, what endless Charms" and "Father of Mercies, in Thy Word." The shade of affliction is more or less seen in the first two.

During the same period the devoted Lady Huntingdon spent an active life in the service of her Saviour and especially in the great revival of the eighteenth century. Though at once the daughter of an earl and the wife of an earl, yet possessing much of the spirit of her Master, she made much of her rank and her wealth for the promotion of fervid evangelical religion. She did much to encourage Whitefield in his marvellous ministerial work,—established a college which still exists, and when she died a century ago, there were sixty-four congregations which were originated and fostered by her efforts under the name of "The Countess of Huntingdon's Connection." She wrote, besides others, "When Thou my righteous Judge shalt come." Such a life as she led might well stimulate other ladies of wealth and opportunity to "go and do likewise."

Another, though a little later, yet a contemporary, was Mrs. Barbauld, whose father and husband were each Presbyterian ministers. She spent a long life in teaching and especially in literary labour. All her compositions are characterised by simplicity of feeling, an easy flowing style and of a pure and elevated sentiment. Of her many hymns "How Blest the Righteous when He Dies" may be regarded as a fair sample. She died in 1825.

Others though born in the last century, but whose life's activities extended far into this, may now be noticed. Among these was the gifted godly woman, Miss C. Elliot, the descendant of a pious parentage, being granddaughter and daughter, as well as sister of highly esteemed ministers. She suffered much during a long life on account of sickness and bereavement, but all this was not fruitless, seeing she was second to few in the number and nature of her hymns, which at once rank high in poetic merit and are rich in spirituality. She was connected in the congregation in London of which the notable Edward Irving was minister. Her best known, though it may not be her best hymn, is "Just as I am," etc., others being more poetic yet not less spiritual. "My God, is any Hour so Sweet?" and "'Tis the Blessed Hour of Prayer," not only speak for themselves but for the character of others.

Of the same period, and each immortalizing herself by a single hymn, were Miss Williams, a literary lady who wrote "Whilst Thee I seek, Protecting Power," also M. de Fleury who wrote the soul-stirring lyric, "Ye Angels who stand round the Throne." The precious hymn which has comforted and cheered so many mourners over dear departed ones, "Asleep in Jesus, Blessed Sleep," was written by a Mrs. McKay, while one akin to it in nature and power, "Saviour like a Shepherd lead us," was written by a Miss Thrupp. Another notable hymn, "Nearer My God, to Thee," second to none in its well-merited and world-wide popularity, was written by Miss Adams, a literary lady and a Unitarian. This hymn has been translated into many languages and has done much not only to lift up Christians but heathens as well.

As we come down to the middle and better half of this century we find a noteworthy volume entitled "Hymns and Meditations" by Miss Anna Warring. Two of the more familiar of these hymns are "Father I know that all my life" and "In Heavenly love abiding." These speak well for themselves and for their King, as well as reflect no little credit upon the writer. But excelling many and excelled by few is Miss Havergal, of whom not a little is now known through a lately published biography. Among her many excellent hymns it would be difficult to make one or two selections. Suffice it to say that she is worthy to rank with the Misses Steele and Elliot. These three constitute a trio who have attained an acknowledged eminence beyond all other lady hymn writers.

While all these were Protestant, yet a peep into the Romish Church will show that there too, there were literary ladies. Prominent among these as hymn writers were M. Guyon and A. A. Proctor. The former wrote especially the rich and not unknown hymn "I would love Thee, God and Father," and an exquisite religious song "A little bird I am," while the latter wrote not a little sweet devout poetry and left not a few well written hymns. She united with the Romish Church in her twenty-sixth year.

Not a little lady literature of a religious cast has been produced specially for children. Prominent among these writers are Misses A. and J. Taylor in their "Original

Poems for Infant Minds." Also Mrs. Alexander's "Hymns for Infant Minds," much admired for their simplicity and devoutness. Mrs. Gillin teaching her infant class the lesson having reference to angels, a little girl said, "I want to be an angel." The little girl was soon thereafter called hence and the hymn which has been a comfort to many was written to be sung at her funeral. The hymn beginning "We speak of the realms of the blest," was written by Mrs. Mills, who, three weeks thereafter, entered the eternal world in hallowed peace and heavenly hope.

It need scarcely be said that there is not a little religious lady poetry that is not lyrical. Among such writers on the other side of the Atlantic may be noticed Mrs. Browning and Misses Ingelow and Rossetti. The more noted of the lyrics of the latter are "I bore with Thee" and "Long Barren." On this side of the Atlantic the first to rise to reputation as a poetess was the very voluminous writer, Mrs. Sigourney. Her hymns, however, are not of the highest merit; among these "Labourers of Christ arise," and "Blest Comforter Divine" are the best. The worthy and well-known hymn "I love to steal away awhile," was written by Mrs. Phoebe Brown. Added to these, though of a later date, may be mentioned the names of Mrs. Prentiss and Mrs. Stowe with Misses Carey, Warren and Crosby, and many besides who have been or are still contributing not a little to the poetic treasures of the Christian Church. While many have cheerily exchanged these sacred songs of earth for the celestial symphonies of heaven, they are yet no less helpful if not needful in guiding and comforting many who are now on the pathway to glory.

FREQUENT RESIGNATIONS.

MR. EDITOR,—While resignations of the pastorate are becoming alarmingly frequent, a few remarks on the subject by the late Professor Pond, D.D., of Bangor Theological Seminary, may be profitably considered. He presents a variety of reasons which may help to account for it:

There are aspects of the times in which we live which must not be passed over in this connection. They are times of great restlessness—uneasiness of the public mind. This is true with respect to other things, as well as religion. Men have lost in great measure the staid, contented, conservative character of their ancestors. If they travel their speed must be five times as great as that of any former generation. If they engage in business, their gains, in order to be satisfactory, must be four or five times as large. If a congregation is to be built up, the work must be done rapidly, or the minister is not the man for it, and must be dismissed. Men seem to have forgotten the important scriptural duty of waiting upon God. Everything must be done for effect—immediate effect; and if important results are not immediately visible, the labour is regarded as thrown away. Every observer of the times must admit that the account here given is substantially true; and if true, it furnishes a reason for the present unsettled state of the ministerial relation.

The present, also, are times when more is expected of ministers than was formerly the case; more study, more general knowledge, more public speaking, more labour of every kind. This increased demand often exceeds the ability of the ministers—either physical or mental, or both. The individual breaks down under the labour imposed upon him. He could have borne the labours of a previous age; but the demands of the present exceed his strength. His health and his courage fail him and he is obliged to retire.

The grounds of dissatisfaction with ministers in these days are various, and some of them to the last degree unreasonable. It is not enough with many that their minister is learned, pious, sound, faithful, unexceptionable in character, and amiable in disposition and deportment. Some do not quite like his manner in the pulpit. He is not sufficiently captivating and popular; not eloquent enough; not great enough for so great a people as they fancy themselves to be. Some think that he does not visit enough, and others that he does not study enough. Some think his services too long; others, too short. Some object that he is not a revival preacher, and that his ministrations are not followed with immediate success.

In regard to most of these causes of dissatisfaction, it ought, however, to be said, that the difficulty, ordinarily, does not arise from the whole church, but from only a part of it, and sometimes a very inconsiderable part. Certain individuals become dissatisfied, on one ground or another, and determine, if possible, to effect a change. And so they continue to agitate the question, to promote alienation and stir up a strife, and increase by all means the number of the disaffected, till the party becomes troublesome, if not formidable; and then the cry is raised that the minister's usefulness is over, and that, right or wrong, he had better be dismissed, or they threaten, in case he is not being removed, to leave the society, and thereby weaken it to such a degree that his support will become impracticable.

The employment of revivalist preachers, according to Dr. Pond, comes in for a full share of blame in this matter: If he—a revivalist preacher—is needed, or if a considerable portion of the people think that he is needed, this is as much as to say that the pastor is deficient. "Our minister is ignorant, and needs to be enlightened. Or he is dull and stupid, and needs to be awakened. At best, he does not understand the subject of revivals, and needs some one to go before him in this most important part of ministerial work."

On the supposition that a pastor is in health, and is physically competent to the discharge of his duties, I see not how

an evangelist can be called in to his help, at least by his people, so that the fact of their calling him shall not seem to utter itself in language like that which has been given above. And it needs no great acquaintance with men and things to understand that a pastor can not long live, and retain his standing and reputation, under such circumstances. He must inevitably sink, at least for a time. He may recover himself after a season, when his people shall become sensible of their mistake, and better counsels shall prevail. But the probability is, that division and alienation will be excited, the church will be rent asunder, and a dissolution of the pastoral relation will ensue.

It may be further remarked, that a frequent resort to evangelists must necessarily tend to break up the quiet, settled habits of a people, and induce what the apostle calls "itching ears." They become fond of change and excitement, and, like the Athenians of old, would be glad to spend their time in telling or hearing some new thing. They think little of steadfast, holy living, but much of impulses and impression; and he who succeeds best in awakening these is, to them, the best minister. An uneven, fitful state of religious feeling is thus produced, lacking Christianity and uniformity. When a revival of religion is felt to be needed, instead of humbling themselves before God, and seeking blessings at His hand, the first thought is to send for an evangelist. Nothing can be done to any purpose without him. While he is present all hands engage in the work; but when he retires, exertion is relaxed, and the excitement is followed by a season of slumber.

In every view which I can take of the subject, therefore, a systematic evangelism is of disastrous influence, both upon pastor and people. It is a breaking in upon the established order of the gospel, and would result, if generally followed, in the dissolution of that order. From the nature of the case, modern evangelists and settled pastors cannot long exist together. Hence, if the former are to be generally patronized, the latter must soon disappear from the Church. And then our congregations must either do without ministers, or must depend for a supply on itinerants and evangelists. The ministerial character in a little time would lose all respect, and were it not that we rely on the sure promise of God, we should fear that the Church of Christ might be rooted from the earth.

ALIIQUIS.

IN THE STREETS OF TRIPOLI.

In the variegated crowd filling the streets scores of types may be distinguished: Arabs of the town, draped in their blankets like Romans in their togas, and, in fact, the "jaram" is the direct descendant of the toga and, judging from its looks, seems to have retained all the dirt of those intervening centuries; others, whose costume consists simply of a flowing robe, generally white, or, to be precise, which was once white! Sometimes this robe is of silk of vivid hue, and the effect of that gay note in a bit of street is like a poppy in a wheat-field. Bedouins, whose limbs, wiry and strongly muscled, shine a superb bronze colour through their scanty coverings, elbow Jews in ridiculous costumes, half native and half European. In a few moments one has met with an infinite variety of negroes, from the pure type almost without nose and with enormous jawbones and huge lips to those whose lineaments are absolutely Caucasian. Porters, in simple tunics corded about the waist, carry heavy swinging bales on long poles resting on their shoulders, cheering their progress the while with an invocation to Allah and his innumerable prophets, chanted by an old man and repeated by the chorus; a true song of savages, bursting forth like a fanfare of trumpets. Veiled women, voluminously wrapped, pass by like ambling bundles of clothes. Officers by scores, those of the new school, stiff but neat, trying to resemble their German confrères, since the fashion in Turkish circles is to imitate the lions of the day; the older officers kindly looking enough, but in what miserable costumes! Moorish dandies stroll and pose languidly about, seemingly absorbed in preserving their immaculate patent-leather slippers from an impertinent flock of dirt. Crafty-featured Greeks and Levantines thread their insinuating way among the motley groups. At each step it is a new tableau, and the desire seizes you to stop while the eyes follow a curious type, and turning from it with regret you see ten as interesting.—*From Tripoli of Barbary, by A. F. Jacassay, in January Scribner.*

THE late meeting of the Rational Dress Society was marked by an unpunctuality unworthy of the superior woman. It was not until considerably after the hour announced for the commencement of the meeting that Lady Harberton, a gentlemanly-looking lady in an imperceptibly divided skirt, appeared and took the chair. Meanwhile several male reporters had effected an entrance, but were promptly dislodged. Fortunately, however, several newspaper women were there to report the sayings and doings of their rational sisters. A letter was read from Mrs. Oscar Wilde, in which she expressed the opinion that no dress ought to be beautiful in itself, but should derive all its charm from its wearer—a pleasing idea for beautiful women, but not for the majority of the sex. The secretary, Mrs. Hall, reported that the work of the society was progressing favourably, and that it now counts members in Holland, Russia, and far-off Japan. A depot for the sale of "rational" garments has been established in Sloane Street, which, however, is not yet self-supporting. A note of compromise was sounded in the announcement of the importation of some Japanese silks, "quaint and durable, and suitable for ordinary gowns as well as divided skirts."