

The Life of Frances Ridley Havergal

MISS BERTA MCLEOD, PARIS, ONT.

"The tidal wave of deeper souls
Into our inmost being rolls,
And lifts us unawares
Out of all meaner cares.

"Honor to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us to what is low!"

IT is no light task to fathom the depths of such a life as that of Frances Ridley Havergal; but who has not been blessed by the benediction of its "overflow"?

Her writings, rich in feeling, pulsing with devotion, beautifully express the deepest heart experiences and have inspired countless lives to noble purpose and loyal service.



MISS HAVERGAL.

The influence of her pen was great, for behind the beauty and dignity of her literary style lay the power of a consecrated life.

She herself once wrote to a friend: "If I am to write to any good, a great deal of living must go to a very little writing." This accounts for the fine quality of her work.

The record of her childhood reveals the budding of talent. At two years of age she spoke with perfect distinctness an unusual fluency, at four she could read the Bible and any ordinary book correctly, and had learned to write. At seven she composed her first little verses, and from nine years old and upwards wrote descriptive letters in perfect rhyme and rhythm.

In school she made rapid progress, studying French, German and music with great interest and splendid application. Her rare talents were evident to her teachers, and won their warm tributes. Her school days ended, she pursued her studies at home, taking Greek and Hebrew under private tuition. Thus was laid a thorough foundation for that faculty of lucid expression which characterized her writings.

Regarding her spiritual development, we glean from her own autobiography. It seems surprising that the inner heart life, which in her maturity truly shone "more and more unto the perfect day," should have been so shadowed in her youth. She tells of conscious religious awakening at six years, but her experience from then until the beginning of her fifteenth year she describes as a time of "inner darkness and strife and utter weariness of spirit." Then came the gleam of morning brightness as she passed into the joy of conscious trust in Jesus Christ. At eighteen she took the confirmation vow, and the solemnity of the act held deep significance for, and made lasting impression on, her intense nature. The story of the after years reveals a deepening experience, radiance of joy, fullness of peace and complete consecration of her gifts and powers to the service of the Master. She showed the meaning of the words, "Ever, only, all for Thee," by her life, for to her Christ was indeed all in all, and she herself "seemed as one pacing the ramparts in the very presence of the King."

Her versatile talents were manifest in the variety of her activities. Being a daughter of the Rectory, pastoral work,

visitation, teaching, Sunday School classes, and mission societies interested and claimed her attention. She wrote a number of books, both prose and poems, and contributed much to the magazines of the day. In music she displayed no mean talent. She both played and sang with skill, feeling and power, and as if this were not enough, the melody of her own soul found expression in musical compositions of deep merit.

Several times her labors were interrupted by severe illness; then it was the beautiful submission of her spirit was manifest. Her own words are expressive. "I look at trial and training of every kind in this light, not its effect upon oneself for oneself, but in its gradual fitting of me to do the Master's work." "Did you ever hear of anyone being very much used for Christ who did not have some special waiting time, some complete upset of all his or her plans first; from St. Paul's being sent off into the desert of Arabia for three years, down to the present day?"

In her hymn-writing she was without doubt inspired. She ascribes not only the ideas, but the very words and rhymes to the direct suggestion of God. Her humility shines out in her words. "Writing is praying with me, for I never seem to write even a verse by myself, and feel like a little child writing; you know a child would look up at every sentence, and say, 'And what shall I say next?' This is just what I do. The Master has not put a chest of poetic gold into my possession and said, 'Now use it as you like!' He keeps the gold and gives it me piece by piece."

Interesting incidents are related regarding her choice bits of song. Her well-known hymn, "I gave my life for Thee," first appeared in "Good Words," it was written in Germany in 1858. She had come in weary, and sat down opposite a picture with this motto. At once the lines flashed upon her, and she wrote them in pencil on a scrap of paper. Reading them over, they did not satisfy her. She tossed them into the fire, but they fell out untouched! Showing them some months after to her father, he encouraged her to preserve them, and wrote the tune "Baca" specially for them.

This is her own story of the origin of the consecration hymn, "Take my

life." I went for a little visit of five days. There were ten persons in the house, some unconverted and long prayed for; some converted but not rejoicing Christians. He gave me the prayer, 'Lord, give me all in this house!' And He just did! The last night of my visit I was too happy to sleep, and passed most of the night in praise and renewal of my own consecration, and those little complements formed themselves and chimed in my heart one after another, till they finished with, 'Ever, only, all for Thee.'

This true-hearted, whole-hearted devotion to Jesus Christ was the dominant message of her own life, so the strong note in her hymns is that of full surrender and service. Typical of her influence is her message, oft repeated, "Don't hold back from letting Him use you."

In the midst of plans for more far-reaching activities, she was taken ill, and after a brief time of intense suffering, patiently endured, in the fullness of hope that rarely beautiful spirit was freed from earth's limitations to stand in the very presence of the King. But the radiance of her joyful trust and the fragrance of her gracious deeds linger yet to bless the sons of men.

Her resting-place is marked by this inscription, graven on her tomb:

FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

Youngest Daughter of the Rev. W. H. Havergal and Jane, his wife
Born at Astley Rectory, 14th December, 1836.

Died at Caswell Bay, 3rd June, 1879.

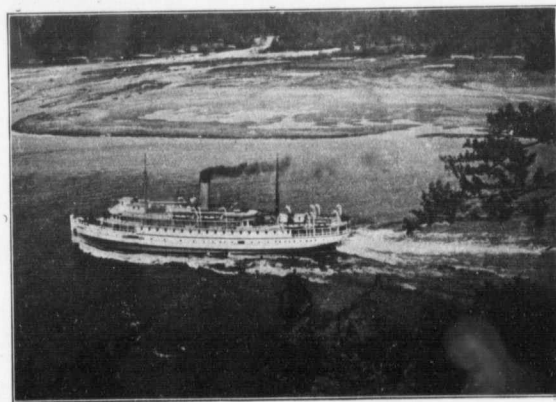
By her writings in prose and verse, she, "being dead—yet speaketh."

"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."—1 John 1: 7.

Temperance puts wood on the fire, meal in the barrel, flour in the tub, money in the purse, credit in the country, contentment in the house, clothes on the back, and vigor in the body.—Dr. Franklin.

Oh, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should with joy, pleasure, revel and applause transform ourselves into beasts.—Shakespeare.

Troops of furies march in the drunkard's triumph. —Zimmerman.



THE PRINCESS ADELAIDE PASSING THROUGH THE NARROWS, VANCOUVER.